Chronicles

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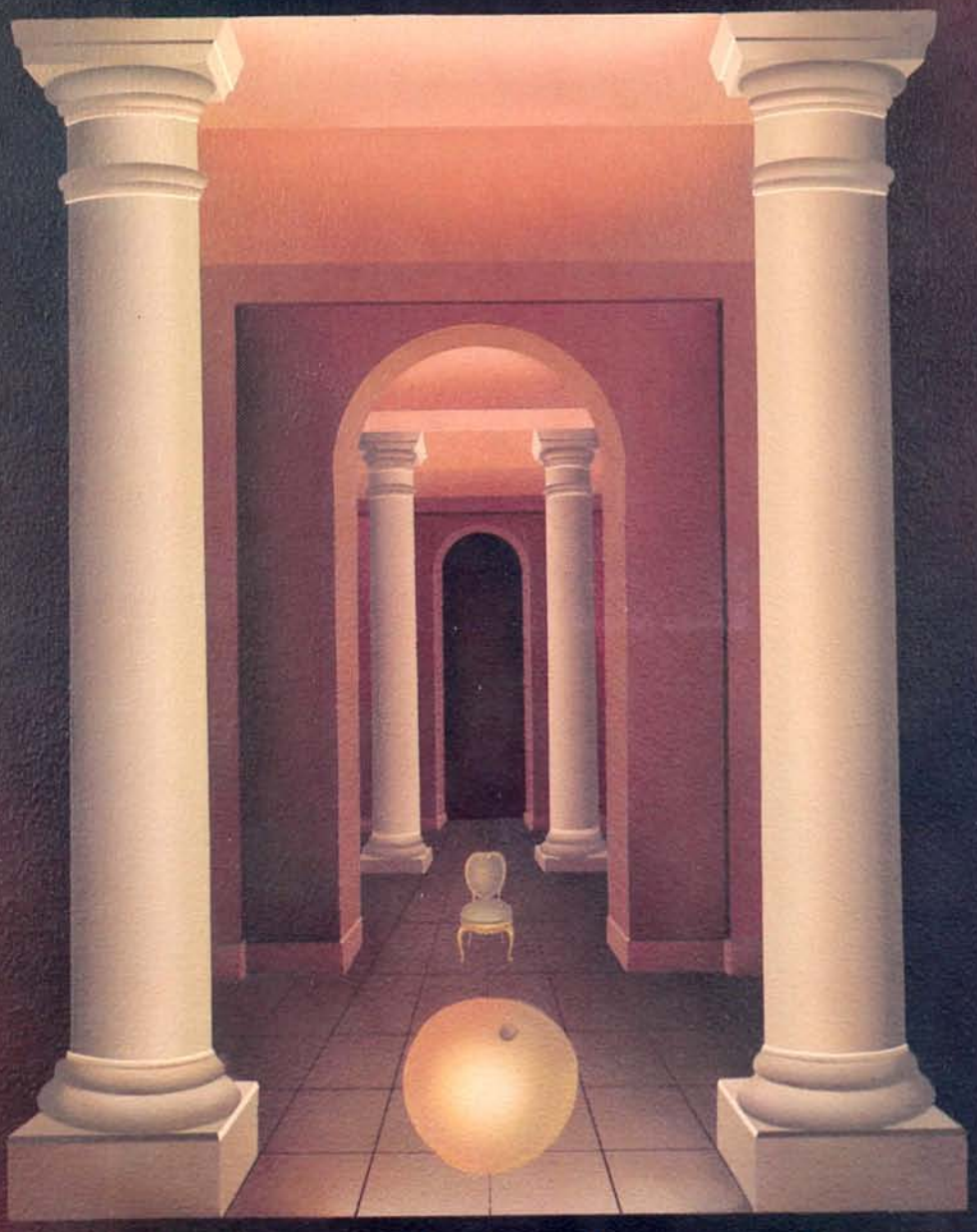

Vandals in the Academy

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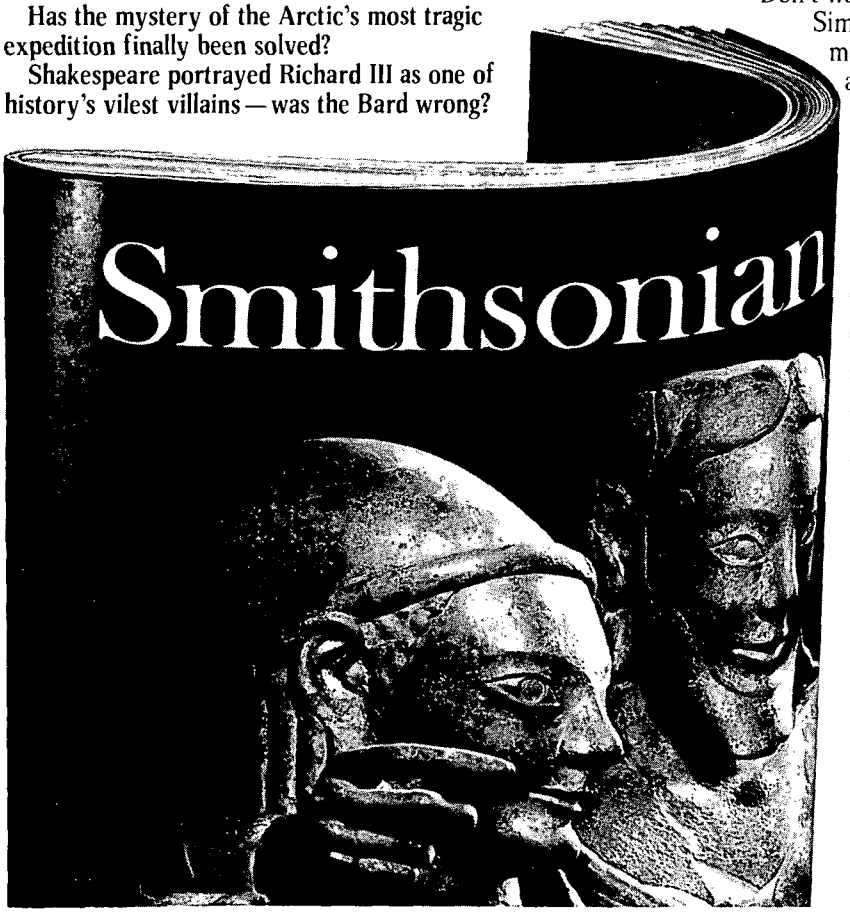

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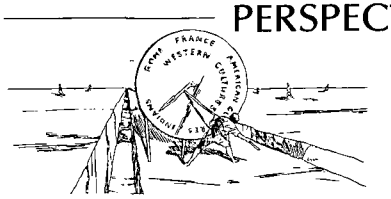
Chronicles
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

"If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be."
—Thomas Jefferson

PERSPECTIVE



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MANAGING EDITOR
Katherine Dalton

SENIOR EDITOR, BOOKS
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CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
John W. Aldridge, Harold O.J. Brown, Samuel Francis, George Garrett, Russell Kirk, E. Christian Kopff, Clyde Wilson

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Leann Dobbs

EDITORIAL INTERN
Christine Haynes

PUBLISHER
Allan C. Carlson

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER
Michael Warder

PUBLICATION DIRECTOR
Guy C. Reffett

COMPOSITION MANAGER
Anita Fedora

CIRCULATION MANAGER
Rochelle Frank

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On 'Another Life'

C.S. Lewis is a major figure for at least three reasons. He was a great historian of European literature; he was an important creative writer in the realm of Northern mythology; he was the most influential Christian lay teacher in the English-speaking world in our century. These things are not easily reconciled and present great challenges for a biographer.

A.N. Wilson's biography, reviewed by Lyle W. Dorsett in the June *Chronicles* ("Another Life of C.S. Lewis"), is probably not the best biography that will ever be written. Among other things, a definitive biography takes at least a half-century's distance. It may be that Wilson is guilty of the petty errors that Dorsett chronicles and others as well. Wilson may be wrong in some of his conclusions about Lewis's private life. I myself disagree with his ratings of some of Lewis's books. However, a serious and independent-minded work on an important subject deserves a more careful treatment from *Chronicles* than Dorsett has given it.

If the biography is as defective as Dorsett contends, then we need a critical analysis, not an attack on the author's competence and motives. The criticism that Wilson has not exhausted all possible sources does not hold, for there is no reason to assume that more research would have changed his *interpretation*. The review will serve to scare off those who have not read the book. I read the book before I saw the review, and it did not convince me.

Wilson says in his book, though less pointedly than I am stating it, that Lewis has become a cult figure to two different groups of Americans, each of which has a vested interest in presenting a limited piece of the man as the whole. First, a certain type of puritan fundamentalist, exemplified by the Wheaton College Lewis shrine. Second, persons of a certain type of aesthetic sensibility who tend to become Roman converts.

The first group declines to account for the C.S. Lewis who drank and smoked all his life with old-fashioned British heartiness; whose main relationships with women were, if not dishonorable, at the least highly irregular; and whose forays into mythology, if regarded honestly from a fundamentalist viewpoint, would have to be considered diabolical. The second group cannot account for that Lewis who was a bluff Ulsterman, who was baptized and buried a plain Anglican, and who pointedly refused to follow Chesterton and Tolkien on the path to Rome.

Mr. Dorsett seems to be speaking for the first group. The fact that both of these groups have received Wilson's biography with irritation and recrimination is one of the best arguments in favor of our further attention to the book.

—Clyde Wilson
Columbia, SC

On 'La Pasionaria of the Beltway'

I have been to Washington exactly twice in my life, and unless you count an airport layover, I remain innocent of the sinful pleasures of New York. On the face of it, it would seem hard to mark me down as a member of "Peggy Noonan's Beltway claque." But I get the impression from Jeffrey Hart's review (June 1990) that he is not one to be deterred by such minor details. After all, we have here a man who is shocked, *shocked* to discover that an autobiographical writing is well stocked with first-person pronouns, and that a book by a good-looking woman carries on its cover a picture of the author without a bag over her head. Perhaps the same thought process was behind his dogged determination to perceive this fundamentally good-natured book as being suffused by "loathing." I suppose when you look at the world through a haze of hate, all objects take on the same reddish tinge. Be that as it may, it's obvious that we're dealing with—shall we say?—a special kind of mind.

Not that that should surprise anyone. This performance was vintage Hart. Many readers will have instantly recognized the coxcomb swagger and

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malignant fatuity that the professor has made so painfully familiar to veteran followers of *National Review*.

The review made me sorry in three ways. First and foremost, of course, I am sorry to see a good woman and brilliant conservative writer viciously abused for no serious reason. Second, I am sorry to have borne for some months a silent grudge against Mr. William Buckley, whom I had thought responsible for the dry-gulching of Mrs. Noonan in *NR* last fall. It is a relief to learn that that exploit should be credited (if that is the word for it) to Professor Hart.

Lastly, I was deeply distressed to see Professor Hart refer to *Bouvard and Pecuchet* as "great." After all, it is.

—*C.H. Ross*
Nashville, TN

Mr. Hart Replies:

According to C.H. Ross, I am "not one to be deterred by minor details."

In my inattention to detail, when I wrote that sentence, I had never heard of a "C.H. Ross." I had in mind people who were well-known and who had planted mendacious items in a Washington gossip column. I do notice, however, that C.H. Ross seems to be constituting himself as a one-man claque.

In the July 1990 issue of the *American Spectator* I find a very long letter from none other than C.H. Ross attacking a negative review of Noonan's book by Mary Eberstadt. This review made much the same points my piece did. C.H. Ross's approach was to mock Mary Eberstadt in a flood of verbiage, without refuting one thing that she had said.

Reviewing Noonan's book in *National Review*, former White House speechwriter Aram Bakshian made many of the same points that Mary Eberstadt and I made. After all, they are scarcely contestable. Mr. Bakshian says that he actually pulled his punches.

I have received a flood of correspondence about Noonan's performance in Washington. If C.H. Ross wants this to go public, well, be my guest.

There is no way to "reply" to his comments on my article. I support my judgments, literary and political, with quotations and other evidence. He offers in answer no evidence and no serious argumentation. He resorts merely to name-calling and personal insult. There is no way to "reply" to that.

On 'Post-Cold War'

Murray N. Rothbard's "Foreign Policy for the Post-Cold War World" (May 1990) covers much territory in a fine fashion. However, his assessment of the Soviet situation does not rest on solid ground.

John T. Flynn prophesied the coming of fascism in the United States without realizing that fascism is merely communism in uniform with white gauntlets. Samuel Goldwyn has good advice for prophets: "Never prophesy —particularly the future."

The Soviet situation has yet to play itself out. So also Jeane Kirkpatrick's thesis regarding totalitarianism and authoritarianism. The totalitarians—Hitler, Mussolini, Allende, Ceausescu, and other small fry—were old soldiers who did not fade away, so they had to be blown away. The odds are that a hurricane will come to the Soviet Union. As Clausewitz said over a century ago, "Such a country [Russia] can only be subdued by its own weaknesses, and by the effects of internal dissension. In order to strike these vulnerable points in its political existence, the country must be shaken to its very center." Lenin echoed this in his works, crediting Clausewitz, his mentor.

Pan-Slavism and Russophilism still have deep roots in Soviet areas and will be a major concern. We seem not to understand that while the United States is composed of many tribes of the earth, none are clinging to a bit of American real estate called a homeland, motherland, or fatherland. The rest of the world is saddled with tribal loyalties, with the many tribes, large and small, securely attached to their bit of ground. The many European wars arose from emotional tribal/land outbreaks.

Lord Brougham, a Scottish jurist, said, "Education makes people easy to lead, but difficult to drive; easy to govern but impossible to enslave." We have yet to see just how educated the people of the Soviet Union are; if the performance of the economy is any measure, it appears the people still have a way to go.

—*Richard L. Barkley*
Palo Alto, CA

Mr. Rothbard Replies:

I appreciate Mr. Barkley's thoughtful comments. However, it strikes me that John T. Flynn's warning of a coming American fascism was all too prophetic. What else but a "virtuous and polite . . . bureaucratic state . . . the great national banker and investor . . . a powerfully centralized government . . . masquerading under the guise of the champion of democracy" have we been living under?

I have always maintained that the collapse of communism was inevitable; what is never predictable is the timing: in Eastern Europe it took 44 years, in the Soviet Union, 72.

It is certainly true that post-communist Europe will be no Garden of Eden; instead, Europe and near-Asia are reverting to ethnic nationalisms, which indeed have been responsible for modern European wars. But this is the point: that there is no need for the United States to become embroiled in them, especially now that international communism is, to say the least, no longer a monolith. Furthermore, not only has the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe collapsed, but crumbling also is the old Russian Czarist empire. From the Baltics to the Ukraine to Kazakhstan, the conquered periphery of the old Muscovite empire is beginning to demand autonomy and even national independence. In that context, Pan-Slavism and Russophilism are about the last things in the world that the United States has to worry about.

As for education, I see no correlation with freedom or resistance to tyranny: certainly the population of Germany during the 1930's was one of the most highly educated in the world. Nor, alas, has education saved Germany, Great Britain, or even the United States from highly destructive economic policies. I am reminded of a charming and effective paper once delivered to a scholarly conference on education by the distinguished philosopher John O. Nelson. Nelson pointed out that the major argument for compulsory education and the public school in the 19th

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century was that the spread of education was bound to lower the crime rate. He then presented a simple chart showing the behavior of education and crime rates per capita in the United States ever since: both figures, of course, have increased astronomically at much the same rate. While this correlation hardly proves that more education increases crime, it surely casts grave doubt on the opposite thesis.

On 'Leviathan's Children'

Allan Carlson (May 1990) observes the self-serving inclination of certain parts of modern society to free families from the anxieties that modern society itself places on the family. "What," he asks, "have been the results?"

As part of the answer, he posits the rather preposterous notion that Cold War military families are part of an American experiment in socialist family policy. This unfortunate idea seems to be based on some rather fundamental misconceptions.

Carlson apparently believes that service families receive subsidized food and consumer goods in their Post Exchanges. Actually, there is nothing in the military exchanges that is subsidized, and tax dollars are not involved in their operation. Food and goods are procured on the open market and marked up before being resold to customers. The markup is used to pay wages and operating expenses and to procure more food and goods. Operating profits, not tax dollars, are used to construct or remodel exchange facilities. Profits are also used to fund base libraries, theaters, swimming pools, clubs, and similar activities.

Even military commissaries, which are built and operated with tax dollars, do not subsidize food. Sales are, in fact, at cost plus a surcharge.

Some of Carlson's other points are likewise difficult to reconcile with his socialist experiment idea. For instance, that military officers in the 60's were more likely to marry and much less likely to divorce than their civilian counterparts may be explained by factors that have nothing to do with socialization at the Officers' Club. And the fact that wives were less likely to be employed may be attributed to frequent changes in duty stations, many of which are in isolated areas where there are few jobs or in foreign countries that prohibit American wives from taking jobs.

Military personnel tend to reflect the ideas, tastes, preferences, and attitudes of society. Hence, any changes in military family policy more than likely mirror the changes that are already taking place in the civilian community. It is absurd to attribute these changes to some sort of socialist experiment.

I do agree with Carlson when he says, "There are independent and compelling reasons for social conservatives to support a sharp reduction in the size of our standing military force." I do not, however, agree when he says, "this action would represent a traditionalist liberation from the misshapen socialism that has recently taken root in the services."

—Stephen M. Nutt
Duncanville, TX

Mr. Carlson Replies:

Stephen Nutt offers a fair correction concerning Post Exchange operations, although he overlooks both the hidden subsidies enjoyed by the PX system as well as the more complicated history of Army/PX cooperation (e.g., among the Army daycare centers created in the 1950's, the Army provided the buildings and land, while operating funds came from PX profits and daycare fees).

Concerning his objections to the more central points of my essay, I hold to the contention that military families are demonstrably different from civilian families in the degree to which their functions have been directly assumed by government. From the military health care system and base housing to child care and youth activities, military "dependents" are part of a system that is objectively socialist in its operations, effects, and—increasingly—intent.

On 'Art Is Always Political'

Thank you for presenting George Garrett's piece ("Art Is Always Political When the Government Starts Giving Grants," June 1990) dealing with the National Endowment for the Arts, an extremely complex issue that has been trashed by less informed writers. While my ideological inclination is to demand the abolition of all government funding, I also live in the real world and recognize the effect arts funding has on the existence of fine and performing arts.

In actuality, the NEA and National Endowment for the Humanities fund far fewer Mapplethorpes and *Piss Christs* than they fund the more traditional arts. In West Plains, the nearest town to my rural home (with a population of ten thousand), the art council receives funding from the Missouri Arts Council, which in turn receives monies from the NEA. In the past several years, this money—your tax dollars—has paid for a "Mark Twain Tonight" performance, a dance company, a community theater presentation of an Agatha Christie mystery, a harp and flute duo, a newsletter, a celtic music trio, a radio variety show, and a lecture on Sherlock Holmes. The NEH funding, going through two Missouri cultural boards, provided the monies for a group that presented the traditional dances of India and a pair of Ozark fiddle players, as well as providing three lectures this coming year on Ozark social history, the regional Indian Mound sites, and a collection of Egyptian antiquities housed near St. Louis. In most cases, the West Plains Arts Council must either raise equal cash amounts to the funds granted or prove that local volunteers have donated time, services, and products to balance the fund amount—no small task in this conservative community.

Not one of these programs has been offensive to anyone, nor could they be considered "political" in any sense of the word. But I can absolutely assure you that this small Midwestern town would have none of these without the NEA and tax dollars.

All I ask is that when you think of NEA and NEH, think of West Plains before you think of Mapplethorpe. Doing so, the hysteria surrounding First Amendment issues can fade and let the realities of arts funding come to light. Only then can we make an informed decision about the future of the NEA.

—Anita Evangelista
Peace Valley, MO

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Mr. Fleming Replies:

I agree with Anita Evangelista's praise for George Garrett's piece and her insistence that the funding of arts and humanities is a complex issue. But as someone who has observed government-funded arts, humanities, and education at all levels, I do not think she grasps the seriousness of the issue.

Once upon a time local communities, sometimes with the help of the federal government, did a reasonable job of running museums and schools, and in some parts of the country honest efforts are still being made to provide "cultural" activities that do not offend local sensibilities. But these are antiquated relics of days gone by. Much of what our cultural agencies do is, if not downright evil, at least contemptible for its mediocrity and grossly inefficient in its use of public money. Bureaucratic agencies are always parasites that grow at the expense of their hosts—the function they were set up to discharge. Jacob Neusner, who has served on both the Humanities and the Arts Councils, points out that these government agencies have built-in mechanisms (routine pay raises) for increasing the personnel budget at the expense of projects.

But even if the NEA and the NEH were paragons of bureaucratic virtue, I still fail to see why taxpayers in Illinois should subsidize the enlightenment of West Plains, Missouri, or vice versa. Illinois has a legitimate interest in promoting awareness of its own Abraham Lincoln, just as Missouri and the people of West Plains have a perfect right to celebrate Mark Twain, but neither state needs federal money to promote its own interest. I am also curious to learn why any government money should be spent on popular entertainment like "Mark Twain Tonight." Can't the people of Missouri read their greatest author without the help of an actor?

I am well acquainted with the operations of local arts councils and what they do with their state and federal subsidies. Back in South Carolina I observed more than one such group in action, bringing in guitar-picking boyfriends to give concerts that no one attended, paying themselves grants and salaries for cultivating their hobbies, bringing in art exhibits that displayed illustrated works by Anaïs Nin who taught the country boys a thing or two about lesbians.

If local people want to entertain themselves putting on theatrical versions of light fiction, that's swell, but they ought to pay for it and they ought to realize that Agatha Christie is culture in the same way that MTV or *Batman* is culture. In America, at least, entertainment is not a government-backed right included under the "pursuit of happiness" clause of the Constitution; it is something people are expected to pay for themselves.

CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS

MILLS COLLEGE recently repulsed the male invasion invited by the college's board of trustees, and it will remain all female, for the immediate future at any rate. At the same time, in the once proudly independent Commonwealth of Virginia, the state's attorney general, a woman, is attempting to defend the prestigious Virginia Military Institute against a federally ordered female invasion. A private institution's board of trustees may well prove easier to beat into retreat than the federal government's immense equal opportunity and affirmative action machinery.

Most observers and commentators have applauded the victory of the Mills College women, while at the same time—and often in the same article—approving the federal *mainmise* against VMI. Such is the case with William Raspberry, who is unhappy about what he calls his "inconsistent opinions." As though to confuse an already complex question, Raspberry evokes the phenomenon of black colleges—no longer segregated, as they once were, but still predominantly black.

Mr. Raspberry defends the existence of black colleges and, indeed, sends his own children to them. He even defends the existence of separate colleges for black women and for black men. His reasoning: black men and black women should have the right, if they so desire, to pursue their studies under circumstances that they find comfortable, even if they prefer to study only with members of their own sex. His conviction that people might study best under conditions they find congenial explains Raspberry's support of the women of Mills College who want an all-female environment, but it does not explain his dissatisfaction with all-male VMI. Mills College is a private institution, while VMI is a public one, but this is not the important thing for Raspberry. All-male institutions bother him, public or private.

Therefore it is, Mr. Raspberry says, "not quite all right to have predominantly white all-male colleges." He defends his position on black colleges by saying: "We believe our children may be better off, socially and academically, in an environment where race is not an issue." But he argues that it would be "patently racist" to attempt to provide a similarly "comfortable" (Raspberry's term) all-white environment for white students.

One of the arguments used to persuade or pressure exclusive institutions such as previously all-male Ivy League colleges and clubs to open their doors to women was the contention that such colleges and clubs provided academic and professional advantages that would be unfair to deny to women, even though some or even most of their students or members might prefer it that way. On the other hand, in arguing that colleges such as Wellesley and Mills ought to be allowed to remain all-female, the argument is that they provide their students with important advantages that are not available in coeducational institutions. Somehow, this does not quite rhyme.

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Let us suppose that we learned that a major educational institution in Japan categorically refused to admit blacks—or Caucasians, or both. We would immediately call that invidious discrimination. However, if a school in Japan admitted men of all races but no women, or women of all races but no men, would we so quickly condemn it? The Roman Catholic Church does not admit women to the priesthood, nor men to convents; the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod does not ordain women into the ministry, and Orthodox Judaism does not ordain women to the rabbinate. Many people object to these historic policies, but the volume of the objections is far less than would be the case if the Catholics refused to ordain blacks, the Lutherans to ordain Jewish converts, the Jews to ordain Gentile proselytes.

We would agree with Raspberry's point concerning racial segregation: it should never be permitted as a policy, although if personal preferences and other factors cause members of one ethnic or religious group to flock to a particular school, that should not be prohibited. Some historically male institutions remain predominantly male, even though women are admitted: this is still the case with the service academies and with schools such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. But although there are still 96 all-female colleges, colleges that admit only men are virtually extinct. Why is it permissible for a school to remain all female, but wrong for it to remain all male?

Although a number of Wellesley students rather fatuously criticized the choice of Mrs. Bush as a commencement speaker on the grounds that she has allegedly accomplished nothing in her own right, we are unaware of any criticism of the First Lady—or of her partner in that crime, Mrs. Gorbachev—for giving apparent approval to the continuing "sexism" at Wellesley. What Clark University Professor Christina Hoff Sommers calls "gender feminism" would virtually guarantee criticism if Presidents Bush and Gorbachev had been commencement speakers at one of the few remaining all-male institutions, but so far there is no "gender masculinism" to attack Mesdames Gorbachev and Bush for their action. The "gender feminists" are not impartial enough to say that what is sauce for the gander also has to be applied to the goose.

—Harold O.J. Brown

GEOFFREY HARTMAN, Paul de Man's former colleague, a Jew and, while not a scholar in Judaic studies, nonetheless a considerable presence in Jewish scholarship at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, has had to face the fact that the man whose theory of literature he advanced was an anti-Semite and a Nazi in Belgium in World War II. In a long article in the March 7, 1988, *New Republic*, Hartman tries to come to terms with this revelation. In doing so, he points out what is at stake in defending the integrity of language, which De Man's "Deconstruction" put under assault.

Well, he did not exactly face it. He evaded it, explained it away, gave excuses for it, trivialized it, and above all, obfuscated it. Hartman used every trick of the trade to shift attention away from a fact he wishes would go away: that his teacher, colleague, and friend hated Jews and was a Nazi.

Instead of asking how Deconstruction forms a comfortable match with Nazism, Hartman takes for granted that it does not. Hence he evades the critical issue. It is like addressing the relationship between the Gulag and communism by assuming, at the outset, that there is none.

The story is simple. Hartman's clever telling of it makes it much more complicated. From the fall of Belgium in 1940, Paul de Man wrote pro-Nazi articles.

According to Hartman, he "followed the Nazi line in many respects."

De Man argued that Jews "do not have a significant influence on contemporary literature . . . that the ability of Western intellectuals to safeguard so representative a cultural domain as literature from Jewish influence is comforting."

Hartman: "De Man leaves it unclear whether it is comforting because Jewishness itself is unhealthy or because any invasion of Western civilization by a foreign force . . . would reflect badly on its vitality."

De Man would "envisage the creation of a Jewish colony isolated from Europe."

Hartman: "This is not vulgar anti-Semitic writing, not by the terrible standards of the day."

In Hartman's defense I give his next sentence: "But the fact remains that, however polished de Man's formulations are, they show all the marks . . . of identifying Jews as an alien and unhealthy presence in Western civilization." Hartman further points out that at this time, in light of what was going on, De Man's article is more "than a theoretical expression of anti-Semitism."

But Hartman minimizes and trivializes De Man's Nazism and anti-Semitism. This he does even while saying the right words, such as I have quoted, to create the impression that he does not. And how are we to interpret the following: "But I cannot ignore these expressions of anti-Jewish sentiment, *even if they remained polite, even if they were limited to suave cultural essays and never spilled over into exhortatory rhetoric or demagoguery.*"

Hartman concedes, "The discovery of these early articles must make a difference in the way we read the later de Man." Hartman points out that De Man "did not address his past. We do not have his thoughts. Did he avoid confession . . . and instead work out his totalitarian temptation in a purely intellectual and impersonal manner?"

Hartman rejects any relationship between Deconstruction and the Nazism and anti-Semitism of its principal intellect. But the emphasis of Deconstruction is on "the indeterminacy of meaning." That position is seen by some literary critics to be amoral, indeed a statement that there are no rules at all, not in literature, not anywhere else. It is an ethic that would admirably serve an unrepentant Nazi, living out his life among Jews such as Hartman. So Hartman insists, over and over again, "The probity of the Paul de Man we knew and his powerful analytic talent must remain our focus. What is neglected by de Man's critics, who are in danger of reducing all to biography again, is the intellectual power of his later work." But why *not* take the man's biography into account? Do ideas live in a vacuum? Or are they part of the whole person?

To me, there really are absolutes in life and in language: God made the

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world, God gave the Torah, "it has been told you, humanity, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you," "you shall not murder," "you shall not bear false witness." These and other foundations of the moral conduct of civilization stand firm. And up is not down, west is not east, white is not black, either.

And for us Jews, the commanding voice of Auschwitz sets forth this commandment: that anti-Semitism is never to be trivialized. It is not to be excused because "so many did it," Hartman's frightening conclusion: "We can accuse de Man of lacking foresight or civil courage or of underestimating the ruthlessness of the Nazi regime. . . . De Man's 'dirty secret' was the dirty secret of a good part of civilized Europe."

Only a literary theory that relativizes and "contextualizes" language out of all meaning can permit Hartman the self-serving luxury of separating De Man's thought from his life, allowing him to conclude that: "De Man's critique of every tendency to totalize literature or language, to see unity where there is no unity, looks like a belated, but still powerful, act of conscience." No Jew can admire Hartman for writing this way about a vicious anti-Semite and Nazi collaborator. And no person who cares for the integrity of language — the foundation of civilization — can admire Hartman's use of language to defend his friend, colleague, and teacher, now revealed to be the Waldheim of academia.

— Jacob Neusner

WALKER PERCY never tired of asking a simple question: why are people happy in circumstances that ought to make them miserable? It was a question he set for himself in his first collection of philosophical essays, *The Message in the Bottle*, and in one way or another his best novels — *The Moviegoer*, *The Last Gentleman*, *Love in the Ruins* — are his best attempts at providing an answer.

Percy may have been America's most beloved serious novelist. This was not so much because of his manifest literary gifts as for the bemused sympathy he extended to his characters and, therefore, to his readers. He was a kind man, who was well-known for answering letters and telephone calls from perfect strangers. A friend of mine was once forced to call Dr. Percy, whom she did not know at all, on behalf of a very disturbed man who claimed to be the novelist's friend. He could not have been kinder, and did what he could to help in a very difficult situation.

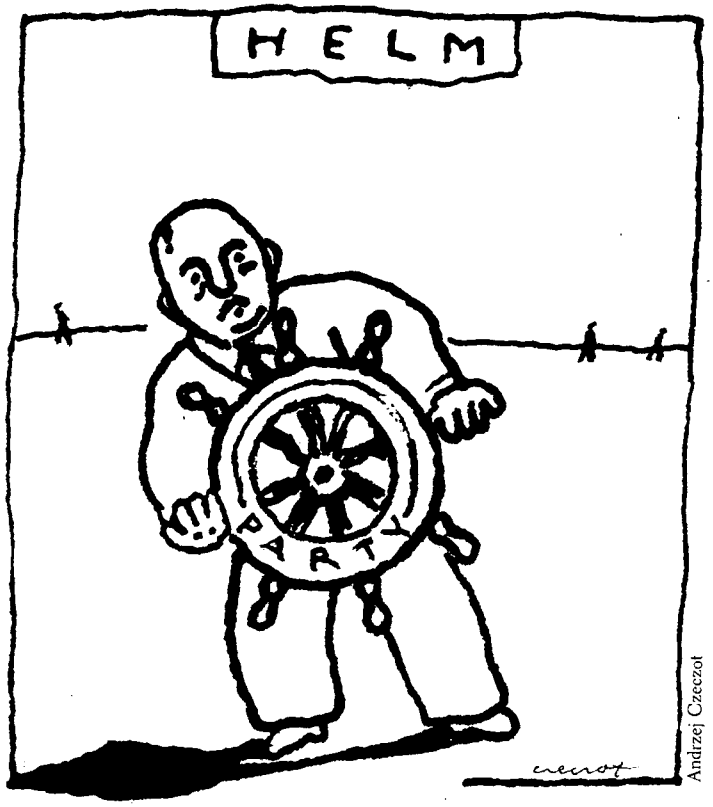
I began reading Walker Percy as a college student but only made his acquaintance on the occasion of the 1988 Ingersoll Prizes. As a recipient he was both modest and amusing. After meeting several of our contributing editors who had a Chapel Hill connection, he exclaimed, "Tom, what kind of magazine are you running? It looks like a Chapel Hill conspiracy." Of course, he too was a Tarheel.

After the banquet we continued to correspond occasionally, about his projected book on the heresies of the social sciences, about possible articles, and about our own little difficulties. After all these years of counting on his wisdom and his humor, it will be hard for Walker Percy's readers to realize that he is no longer here, there are no more books. It is a little like the situation of poor Will Barrett at the end of *The Last Gentleman*, waiting for Dr. Sutter Vaught to explain things to him. He never does. The important thing, I think Dr. Walker Percy would say, is to ask the right questions, as he did. It is up to us to look for the answers.

— Thomas Fleming

THE NEA IS BROKEN, so let's fix it. What has gone wrong in the debate over the National Endowment for the Arts is that the extremes have crowded out the middle, and the NEA, like the NEH, should be a consensus-building agency. The one side invokes an apocalyptic vision of censorship, and the other side lists the things publicly funded art should not say or do. But both are wrong.

Where can we locate the middle position? The answer is that we have a wall-to-wall consensus, from Senator Helms to Senator Pell, Representative Yates to Representatives Armey and Henry and Gunderson — and I respect all whom I have named. This is the consensus that encompasses nearly the entire political community: 1) yes to the arts, 2) yes to the Endowment, 3) no to censorship, and 4) no to paying taxes to help support what an enormous population in this country finds repulsive. Last summer Senator Pell issued a news release in which he



Andrzej Czeczot

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supported reauthorizing the Endowment and opposed restrictions on artists; and he also was explicit in rejecting pornography and obscenity at federal expense. The National Council on the Arts, led by New York State Senator Roy Goodman and Florida State Senator Bob Johnson, unanimously adopted Senator Pell's position, in the exact language of his statement. I have had conversations with members of the House of Representatives in which, time and again, these same points came out, as Representative Steve Gunderson expressed them: yes to the arts, no to pornography, and no to censorship. This I take to be the commonly held, middle position, and it is my position.

In general, public policy is best served when we legislate in general language, working the public will through agencies, not through the specification of do's and don'ts. Anglo-Saxon pragmatism favors practical solutions over theoretical definitions. Congress wants to define policy and create an executive agency to carry out policy; it cannot be expected to conduct an oversight hearing every three days. That explains why, these days, people have rightly focused upon what Congress has to do to accomplish the goals of the Helms-Pell, Armey-Yates consensus: what kind of language do we have to write into the reauthorization legislation so that a congressman supporting the arts through the Endowment, which I think a vast majority of the members of both houses wants to do, does not have to lose his or her seat in the House or in the Senate?

What has happened to short-circuit the political process by destroying the vast middle? A small number of conservatives, whom I respect, do not favor tax support for the arts in any form. A larger number of artists, whom I also respect, and not only because my wife is among them, oppose all limitations on the use of public funds for the arts. Just recently Jonathan Yardley in the *Washington Post* cited an artist who maintains, "You give us the money, and we'll tell you what great art is." Unhappily, for twenty-five years we did give them the money, and they did tell us what great art is, and, in some tiny fraction of the cases, the choices have struck the center of public opinion with such force that the Endowment is still reeling.

When Senator Pell created the Endowment in 1965, he had in mind not a federal ministry of culture, but a federal foundation; that is, a *tertium quid*, a mixture of a foundation, like Rockefeller or Ford, and a federal agency. He further wanted the Endowment to serve on the local and state levels, nurturing the arts in every constituency, serving arts of a variety of disciplines, responding to taste and judgment diffused across the country. That is why he made a major issue out of the establishment of the arts councils in the states as state agencies.

There is no escaping the issues of obscenity, pornography, and offense to religious and racial groups, because when the Endowment, a tax-supported agency within the political process, makes a grant, however small, people wrongly or rightly see government sponsorship implicit in whatever is the artistic outcome. The Endowment creates 250 million art critics. So how are we going to make grants in such a way that the standards of taste and judgment of a very broad community register? In principle, the answer lies in a policy of local, state, and regional participation in a variety of Endowment competitions. I derive the principle from what is at stake, which is the issue of obscenity. The definition of obscenity begins with what a community considers offensive, so let the definition of artistic excellence likewise respond to community consensus on what is beautiful and true and great art.

Specifically, the larger problems emerge from grants made to individual artists, writers and poets, visual artists, sculptors, and the like. At this time grants to individual artists are made in a national competition. I propose "regionalization" of most (though not all) grants to individual artists, meaning, that the administration of grants to writers and poets, visual artists, solo performers, and the like, be located in regional organizations. Why the regions? Because they may bring to full expression the consensus of localities and communities, Atlanta as well as Salt Lake City, Boston as well as Chicago. Why not conduct the competitions through the 50 states and the half-dozen special constituencies? Because these form too small a base, both to produce adequate competition and to provide sufficient grants. It will be difficult for North Dakota or Rhode Island to conduct a competition for grants to solo performers or poets, but the Midwest or New England foundations for the arts can do a fine job. Then North Carolina need not tell New York what to do, nor New York, North Carolina.

Now you may rightly say that the Seranno grant was a state, not a federal action, a decision made in Winston-Salem by the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art. And I plead guilty: it was the choice of Senator Helms's state, not Senator Moynihan's. It's an imperfect world. All I can recommend is that we follow the model of the obscenity definition and appeal to the states and the regions to choose the poets and writers, the visual artists and the solo performers, that, in their judgment, do work of true excellence.

I appeal, therefore, not to the state of the arts, which some deplore, nor to a rhetoric of free expression, which for some substitutes for argument. I am looking for ways in which the NEA can be rebuilt to reflect a consensus, and this will mean doing some of the things we now do in different ways. If I am wrong, if there is no consensus, then my modest proposal will prove monumentally irrelevant. But then, I am confident, there also will be no NEA. For in the end we shall not have entitlement without accountability, not for the Department of Defense and not for the NEA, to name the largest and the smallest agencies, so unequal in size, but so equal in the weight of public concern we attach to them.

When President Carter had to appoint a chairman for the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1978-79, he was reported to have said that he found himself subjected to the heaviest pressures he ever encountered in making any appointment—and he (quite fairly) confessed he was not sure what humanities are anyhow. And I am sure that President Bush by this point must wonder whether people care more for a dollar of tax money spent on a bottle of urine and a plastic statue of Christ than five billion dollars for a space station that may prove a source of equal exasperation.

—*Jacob Neusner*

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Principalities & Powers

by Samuel Francis

After two years of desperate pretense that the Bush administration is but the long afternoon of the Reagan era, many of Mr. Bush's conservative supporters now begin to suspect that morning in America is fast lurching toward chaos and old night. The President's apparent willingness to consider tax increases, despite his best-known campaign promise, and the return of Secretary of State James Baker from Moscow last spring wearing little more than his underpants have disabused many on the right of any illusions they may have harbored. They are late, but they are not alone, and far from the Beltway comes the unsettling murmur of rebellion, this time not from the tenured revolutionaries of the left or the tax-exempt populists of the right, but out of the swamps and hills of the American heartland.

When David Duke announced in 1988 that he would run for the Louisiana state legislature, few paid much attention. Mr. Duke first gained national headlines in the early 1970's, when he won fame for being a member of the Ku Klux Klan as well as a college graduate, and he has run for office several times before — most recently for President in 1988. Any almanac will give you a complete list of such also-rans, from anti-Masons and Know-Nothings down to the candidacies of Angela Davis, Dr. Spock, and Lyndon LaRouche. But then Mr. Duke won the legislative race, the almanacs had to be rewritten, and ears, even inside the Beltway, began to prick.

Mr. Duke not only won his election — against the brother of a former governor and despite the fulminations of President Bush and Republican National Committee Chairman Lee Atwater and the avuncular counsel of Ronald Reagan — but also now seems to be on the verge of trouncing Republican State Senator Ben Bagert in Louisiana's senatorial primary next month. If, as seems likely, Mr. Duke beats Mr. Bagert and keeps Democratic incumbent Bennett Johnston from winning more than 50 percent of the vote, he will face Senator Johnston in November. Should he win against him, the rebellion will begin to sprint.

Mr. Duke, however, has come a long way since he posed for pictures in Klan robes and Nazi uniform. While he refuses to denounce the Klan, he does not spend time or energy arguing that God has cursed the children of Ham or that the Elders of Zion are fluoridating the drinking water from their headquarters in the Federal Reserve System. Nor does he dote on the conclusions of researches conducted by the late William Shockley, Arthur Jensen, and others who believe that human intelligence is largely inherited and that white people generally got a larger slice of the intellectual pie than black people. Just because he doesn't talk about such matters does not mean that Mr. Duke doesn't believe them, though he is quite cagey about whether he does or doesn't. But regardless of what he thinks about these and other subjects, Mr. Duke's success in the polls has little to do with such beliefs or with the kind of clothes he used to wear. Louisiana and most other states are full of characters who strut around in funny uniforms and would like to have political power, but few citizens there or anywhere else are dumb enough to vote for them.

Mr. Duke has gained and kept a political following because he understands something many contemporary conservatives have forgotten or in some cases never knew: what attracts voters to a candidacy of the right is not what the candidate thinks or says about the gold standard, creating democracy in Afghanistan, expanding economic opportunities, or being kinder and gentler, but what he will do to preserve and protect what used to be called the American Way of Life, the normative patterns and institutions that define and distinguish what Americans believe and do from what other peoples believe and do — in short, the American culture.

Voters — not all of them, but many — are attracted to candidates who express clear positions supportive of traditional American culture because they have to live every day with the erosion spawned by politically engineered assaults from individuals and groups that despise American norms and want to get rid of them. For example, the ACLU and kindred lobbies that manipulate judicial power to uproot folkways and the distribution of social and political power that folkways support; the "multiculturalism" lobby, which uses the government education system to crush Euro-American culture; and the civil rights establishment and its allies in the immigration lobbies, which seek to dig a bottomless pit of welfare rights, political privilege, affirmative action programs, and set-asides to dispossess white Americans economically and culturally and gain the loyalty of their nonwhite following in the underclass and the government-created middle class. Such forces also enjoy the support of the bureaucratic elites in the managerial state, corporations, unions, and mass media, which use them to expand their own power.

The practical results of the success of this alliance are commonly seen in the violent crime that crippled police and prosecutors are unable to suppress, in entire systems of local government overturned by courts for the purpose of ensuring "minority" power, in competent white students denied admission to college because of the lower standards of enrollment universities allow for nonwhites, and in qualified white job applicants unable to work because of affirmative action and set-aside plans. Yet such material consequences of the racial and cultural revolution merely frame its substance. In high school and college, television and film, the traditional culture of Europe and America is vilified, belittled, debunked, and deconstructed, while white, Christian, male heterosexuals are consistently portrayed as criminals, tyrants, incompetents, and madmen. Probably more than the direct material effect of dispossession, this less tangible but far more pervasive dismantling and discrediting of an entire civilization has produced the smoldering psychic embers from which rebellion bursts into revolutionary flame.

The core of the revolution consists of what sociologist Donald I. Warren some sixteen years ago called "Middle American Radicals," or "MARs," a social and political force largely identical to what is usually called — depending on one's inclination to affect dispassion, enthusiasm, or contempt — "lower middle-class white ethnics," the "Reagan Democrats," or the "Bubba vote."

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Professor Warren, however, defined MARs in terms of a common attitude they shared. "MARs are a distinct group," he wrote, "partly because of their view of government as favoring both the rich and the poor simultaneously. . . . MARs are distinct in the depth of their feeling that the middle class has been seriously neglected. If there is one single summation of the MARs perspective, it is reflected in a statement which was read to respondents: *The rich give in to the demands of the poor, and the middle income people have to pay the bill.*"

The white voters who elected Mr. Duke to the state legislature last year from District 81 are virtual MARs archetypes. According to a survey conducted for the *New Orleans Times Picayune* after the election,

> Duke's constituents live in a microcosm of white, suburban America. District 81 is characterized by middle incomes, fear of crime and a distaste for taxes. Moreover, the voters . . . express a smoldering [there's that word again] sense that, at worst, government confiscates the work of its best citizens and lavishes it, to no apparent effect, on people who are ungrateful or openly hostile.
>
> Affirmative-action programs, minority set-asides, racial quotas and other efforts on behalf of blacks have tilted the system against them, the voters said. When it comes to job and educational opportunities, they feel whites increasingly are ending up on the short end of the stick.
>
> In Duke, voters said they saw an opportunity to fight back.

Voters won't get that opportunity from Mr. Bush, however, nor from Dan Quayle, Jack Kemp, Newt Gingrich, and the other luminaries of the Republican firmament, nor even from their ideological mentors who shine under the labels of "neoconservatism," "big government conservatism," "cultural conservatism," and, most recently, "the New Paradigm." Last summer the Heritage Foundation published a report on the Kennedy-Hawkins Civil Rights Bill of 1990, and while Heritage properly opposed the bill and affirmative action, it pronounced what is nothing less than an abandonment of traditional conservative principle regarding civil rights legislation.

The "conservative view of progress" on civil rights, Heritage informed us, demands that "government must prosecute cases of discrimination against individuals to the full extent of the law. Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act . . . should be strengthened to include remedy of damages against those who willfully discriminate. Building on this enforcement strategy, the conservative civil rights strategy would call for aggressive court and legislative action to challenge modern-day Jim Crow laws that stifle minority business development." Examples of such latter-day "Jim Crow laws" include "the 1931 Davis–Bacon Act, which freezes out minority firms from government construction contracts, and onerous licensing laws for professions ranging from cosmetology to child care."

Yet these laws, as the Heritage paper acknowledges, are "seemingly neutral in their impact on the races," and, unlike Jim Crow laws, which explicitly discriminated on the basis of race, merely have the effect of placing black-owned firms under disadvantages. There are good reasons to repeal Davis-Bacon and many occupational licensing laws, but to do so because they have the effect — rather than the intent — of racial discrimination is to embrace conventional liberal ideas that legitimize affirmative action and special privileges for members of certain races over others. Through exactly the same logic, universities require lower SAT scores for black applicants than for whites because holding all applicants to the same standards, while "seemingly neutral," would in effect exclude many blacks from admission. Thus the new "conservative civil rights strategy" winds up in the same place conventional leftism started out.

Nor does Heritage explain why ending and punishing "racial discrimination" should be legitimate goals and activities of the federal government at all, or why the state should undertake special efforts to ensure "business development" — or home-owning, or an end to poverty, or psychic contentment — for any particular group. Whatever the flaws of Jim Crow codes before the 1960's, federal involvement in chasing racial discrimination through the Civil Rights Act resulted in a massive expansion of centralized power on behalf of the therapeutic management of social, political, economic, and cultural relationships that no real conservative can countenance.

Heritage is not alone in demanding further acceleration of the civil rights revolution through the use of federal power. Last winter, conservatives gathered secretly in New York to discuss what they were going to do with their little empires in the coming decade. For "cultural conservative" Paul Weyrich, the agenda seems to be focused mainly on helping the black underclass. An eight-page memorandum circulated by Mr. Weyrich at the meeting centered almost entirely on measures designed to help minorities in inner cities while largely ignoring traditional white middle-class conservative constituencies that continue to face social, economic, and cultural demolition.

Yet it is precisely such constituencies that supported conservative activism — indeed, made it possible through their donations — and voted the current crop of Republican politicos into office. They did so because the propaganda and rhetoric these activists and politicians uttered made them believe that the continuing assault on their beliefs, lifestyles, institutions, and aspirations would be resisted. But except for campaign applesauce about Willie Horton, the Pledge of Allegiance, the American flag, capital punishment, and religion, today's "conservatives" have no serious intention whatsoever of doing so.

There is a good deal of talk these days about the "conservative crack-up," and much of it is justified. But what has cracked up is not the popular radicalism of the right but rather the phony "populism" of the conservative establishment, which has signed up with the other establishments that run the country. Even from their watchtowers on the Washington Beltway, the barons of this establishment can smell the smoke of rebellion drifting in from the prairie, and they know they didn't start the fire, can't control it, and can't put it out. It won't take any more secret meetings in New York to learn that whoever does control that fire will determine the real political agenda for the next decade. ◈

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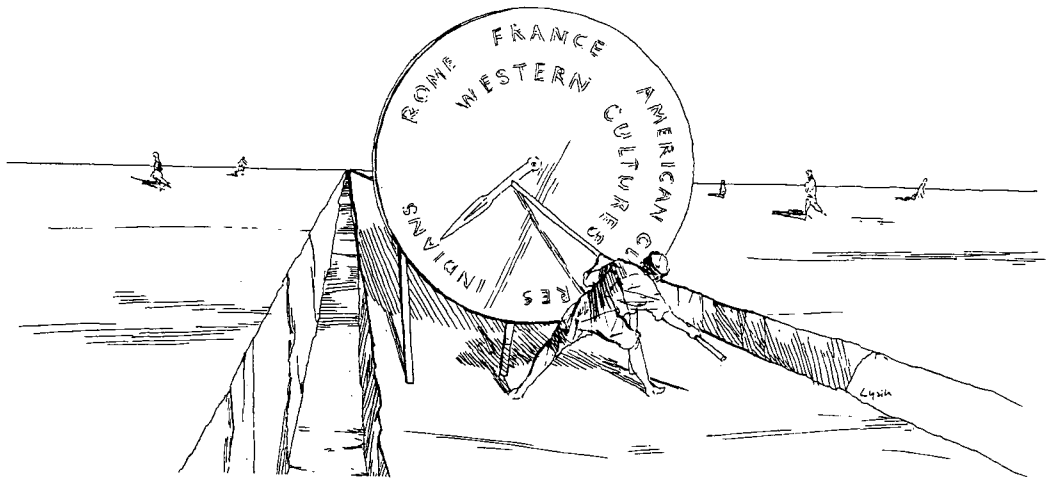

Wincjusz Lysik

Revolution and Tradition in the Humanities Curriculum

by Thomas Fleming

A few years ago I found myself in the belly of the beast. To be more accurate, I was actually in the appendix of the beast, the Department of Education, giving a paper on curriculum reform. Secretary Bennett, who preceded me, spoke with his accustomed exuberance of the then current crisis in the humanities and of the need to recover our inheritance. When the time came for me to speak, I could not help remarking upon how familiar it all seemed. For nearly eighty years conservatives like Irving Babbitt, Albert Jay Nock, and Russell Kirk had been complaining about the state of American education, and the worse things got, the milder the criticism had grown. Babbitt would have restored the classics to their preeminence, Nock wanted to educate only a saving remnant, but Mr. Bennett was willing to settle for a few readable books that promoted democratic ideals. In educational criticism, as in education, there has been a Hesiodic progression from an Age of Gold to the Age of Iron in which we find ourselves.

The decline is nowhere more apparent than in the most recent controversies over curriculum. The strife surrounding Stanford's decision to abolish its "Western culture" course in favor of something more sensitive to the needs of minorities attracted a great deal of attention in the press. Who can forget the images of Jesse Jackson leading his band of Red Guard cultural revolutionaries in the chant, "Hey Hey Ho Ho, Western Culture's gotta go"? Or Secretary Bennett's spirited defense of the old curriculum as a bedrock of democratic values?

The opposition to what is now called Eurocentrism is a Rainbow coalition of blacks, Hispanics, Asians, Indians, feminists (I deliberately do not say women), homosexuals, and guilt-ridden white males, all of whom claim to have been repressed by a civilization of sexist, racist, and capitalist white Christian males. Do I exaggerate? New York State's report "A Curriculum of Inclusion" begins with this already much-quoted sentence:

> African Americans, Asian Americans, Puerto Ricans/Latinos, and Native Americans have all been the victims of intellectual and educational oppression that has characterized the culture and institutions of the United States and the European American world for centuries.

Is this debate really important or is it only a tempest in the very small humanities teapot? I for one think it is very important, more important perhaps than the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and more poisonous to our culture than the AIDS epidemic.

Every society, civilized or not, has a curriculum. Children everywhere have to learn the techniques of survival and the lore of the tribe; they must learn to recognize who is who in the band, and the approved methods of propitiating the gods or spirits upon whom all life depends. In the ancient world, the curriculum bears a strong resemblance to primitive practice. Greek boys, in addition to their instruction in militaristic sports, memorized Homer, learned to read and write and do simple math. They were also taught the lore

Different versions of this essay were given as lectures at the March 1990 Colorado Association of Scholars meeting in Boulder and at the Philadelphia Society meeting in Chicago in April.

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and social mechanics of Thebes, Miletos, or Athens. By the fifth century, city-dwelling Greeks of the middle and upper classes were making sure that their boys received instruction in the arts of public speaking and debate, and this rhetorical curriculum dominated ancient higher education down to the very end of antiquity.

The object of this education was, in Quintilian's phrase, a "good man skilled in speaking," by which the Roman rhetorician meant a man whose morals and training fitted him to be of some use to his society. This emphasis on rhetoric was to outlast even the fall of Rome. The medieval curriculum, while derived directly from ancient practice as well as from ancient handbooks and treatises, was necessarily different, since it was adapted to the needs of the church, but the differences may be less significant than the continuity.

The same can be said of the first great curriculum reform known as the Renaissance. The main "project" of the Renaissance humanists was educational, and despite the various waves of change and reform, the 14th-century ideals of Petrarch and his successors were institutionalized as the core of humane learning and remained in force down to the early decades of the 20th century.

Throughout its long history, the classical curriculum was traditional in form and outlook. There was reform, of course, and even progress, but the core remained the teaching of ancient languages and ancient literature.

Even at the height of its power and influence, the classical curriculum did not go unchallenged, and beginning at least with John Locke, Enlightenment thinkers in Britain and France set about their quiet work of curriculum revolution — the first such revolution in the history of education.

That it was meant as a revolution can be seen on nearly every page of Rousseau's pedagogical novel, *Emile*, in which the author instructs us to "Take the exact reverse of current practice and you will almost always do right." But the educational ideas of Rousseau and Helvétius and the other Enlightenment intellectuals had to remain on the drawing board, until the French Revolution furnished both the will and the means to do something about refashioning the human race.

Among the business pursued by the various revolutionary assemblies was a series of reports and commissions on what to do about French education. The authors of these reports were among the brightest intellectual stars of the revolution: Mirabeau, Talleyrand, and Condorcet. Each had his pet theory to push and favorite hobbyhorse to ride, but they were in accord on several basic principles: 1) that education was the business of the nation and therefore the responsibility of the state; 2) that a new education was needed for the new species of man that would live in post-revolutionary France — the classics were out; 3) that education should be nationalistic and ideological in preparing the minds of citizens.

In the infant republic of the United States, there were also Enlightenment intellectuals who opposed the classical curriculum, but their ideas made little headway in the first hundred years of our nation's history. Our ancestors saw themselves in the mirror of antiquity, and it was not by some historical accident that Jefferson and Adams and Madison turned constantly to ancient examples in their deliberations on the best form of government for the new United States. They chose to set up a free republic, and that choice was determined by their reading of the classics. The decay of republican government, by the way, exactly coincides with the decay of the classical curriculum.

However, by the turn of this century, the Progressives were firmly in the saddle, both in politics and in education. Presidents Roosevelt and Wilson beat the drum mercilessly for change and progress, and a new generation of professional educators finally adopted the principles of Diderot, Mirabeau, and Condorcet in the same way that our political leaders adopted the principles of Robespierre. This was not, I remind you, simply a change in content or technique. The educational reformers of the early 20th century wanted to remake human nature. In the Soviet Union they were to speak of the New Soviet Man, and in the United States the followers of John Dewey would give us the New Democratic Man. Woodrow Wilson, himself an ex-college president, summed up the aims of the new education in 1914: "The use of a university," he said, "is to make young gentlemen as unlike their fathers as possible," and universities ever since have been working hard to turn students against their parents' ideals.

The revolution was made in the period between Charles Eliot's appointment as president of Harvard in 1869 and John Dewey's retirement from Columbia in 1930. Eliot devoted much of his career at Harvard to promoting an elective system that, in the end, required only French. If some teachers and some students could not survive under a system that stressed individual responsibility and competition, then that was just as well, since Eliot's vision of the university, like his vision of life, was essentially a genteel form of social Darwinism.

Dewey, on the other hand, was not only a democrat but a statist and an anti-individualist. It was up to the nation collectively to decide what its goals were and how its children should be brought up to strive for those goals. America was an experiment in democracy, and for that experiment to succeed, it must indoctrinate its students for life in a society where people were committed to taking care of each other.

Under the influence of these and other educational leaders, American colleges and high schools abandoned Latin to the tender mercies of student choice, and let in a flood of new studies, first in the humanities and sciences and next in the social sciences. Since Eliot's elective system was far too elitist and libertarian to win widespread support, college administrators picked and chose from among the new disciplines to find an alternative both to freedom and to tradition. What had been a coherent curriculum, refined by experience and precedent, turned into a grab bag of electives, whose only shape was determined by a loose set of core requirements. Where I went to school in the 1960's, this meant one or two years of English, two years of history, two years of foreign language, one of science, and one of mathematics. Of course, this same reactionary college imposed an additional requirement on anyone wanting to graduate with an A.B.: four years of college-level Latin or Greek.

At most schools, however, the requirements were looser and less coherent: no history requirement but a social

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science requirement that could be fulfilled with history, psychology, or sociology; the math unit could be satisfied with logic; and science by kitchen chemistry or amateur astronomy or even "geography." At Chapel Hill I met a student satisfying a requirement by taking "Foods of the World."

Oh, there were dissident voices, and here and there a Great Books program (as at the University of Chicago under Hutchins) or a humanities core (as at the University of Wisconsin under Meiklejohn), but these half-measures, while they did highlight the failure of the progressive curriculum, were a poor substitute for a traditional curriculum that had been evolving over more than two millennia. Like so many "conservative" experiments, these humanities curricula were the products of a loyal opposition that wanted to hold onto a few trinkets of the old order without rejecting the broad goals of the revolution. A conservatism dedicated to preserving last year's progressivism is doomed to failure, if only because the general course of revolution is almost always to the left. As Daniel Bell has remarked of Robert Hutchins' reforms at the University of Chicago, "All revolutions fade and after a while look tedious to their successors."

Those successors had revolutionary projects of their own. Beginning in the 60's, New Left Marxists fought for the power to teach critical theory, blacks set up black studies curricula, and feminists invented women's studies; all this was tolerated by the grumbling defenders of the progressive curriculum, but capitulation never resolves a struggle, and timidity only invites more claims.

This takes us to the present time and the controversy over "diversity." On the radical side, minority representatives are demanding inclusion and eventual dominance over the humanities curriculum. By themselves, ethnic and sexual minorities could do nothing, and their success is owed to the collaboration of their liberal and radical colleagues who rail against the culture they are paid to uphold.

The main point is not, we must remember, an appreciation of oriental, African, and Native American cultures. That would require a serious study of difficult foreign languages, anthropology, and religion—no, the point remains what it has always been in curriculum reform: a militant resentment against the traditions and institutions of civilized life.

The rootless and uncivilized professoriat is, for this reason, willing to endorse the claims made by blacks, Hispanics, Asians, Indians, and homosexuals—all in the name of pluralism and diversity. Professors can hardly be expected to defend a civilization they have never been part of, and their self-hatred and self-contempt—the mark of the beast that is engraved upon losers and weaklings everywhere—spills over into hatred and contempt for the entire culture of the West.

A recent conference at Rutgers assembled as distinguished a group of these cultural rebels as you could find. It was a mixed group of minority rights advocates and establishment leftists, willing to make reforms so long as the status quo is not threatened. Among the latter group, Leon Botstein, president of Bard, plainly thought that the radicals were ruining their own revolution by "slugging it out over 10 percent of the curriculum." He nonetheless excoriated the "false nostalgia" of the old curriculum's defenders. Speaking for the future, however, was a dean of something called Clarion State College, who told the group that "retraining" the tradition-bound faculty would be a major part of the reforms they had in mind.

This call for reeducation is an all-too-common feature of contemporary thought control in universities, which are jettisoning all requirements but one: minority sensitivity classes for freshmen.

I think we should not be too harsh in criticizing the current crop of curriculum reformers. Their hostility to Western civilization is only the natural outcome of their own educational experiences. Imagine the case of a professor of 20th-century English or political science—a Botstein or a dean of Clarion. He will have been exposed, in his graduate school days, to a few snippets of Milton and Pope or Aristotle and Cicero, but lacking any training in ancient languages or history, his textbook initiation into the classics will have only confirmed his antipathy to the traditions of humane learning. Ignorant, themselves, of all the things that used to define an educated man, many younger humanities and social science professors inevitably resent the larger part of the content of Western Civ. courses. They are, therefore, perfectly content to give way to the demands of minority groups that may be, in fact, statistically insignificant.

The motives are particularly clear in discussion of Native American Indian studies. Spokesmen for so-called Native Americans, a group of peoples that has virtually no literature and no history apart from what is written about them by their enemies, have been demanding a large share of humanities and history instruction in elementary and high schools.

Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and homosexuals all make similar claims, all in the name of pluralism and diversity. As one semi-official tract, "In Praise of Diversity," puts it: "Finally, the time has come to celebrate the diversity that characterizes a country in which some three hundred different native American Indian tribes were joined by numerous peoples from every continent and every country on this planet." What time is left for a recognition that our language and our legal and political systems are derived from Britain, our culture an inheritance from ancient Greece and Rome and from medieval and modern Europe? Very little.

But who stands on the other side, what champions do we have defending this old civilization of ours? Sullen and disgruntled progressives, for the most part. Some of them at Stanford defended the humanities curriculum on the grounds that it was useful for teaching students how bigoted we have been in the past.

The most famous critic of the curriculum in recent years is Allan Bloom, whose *Closing of the American Mind* must be the most unreadable best-seller of all time. Most of what Bloom says by way of negative criticism is unexceptionable, although it has been said better by earlier critics like Thomas Molnar, Jacques Barzun, and Albert Jay Nock. But like so many lukewarm conservatives, Bloom wants to have his cake and eat it. He wants to criticize the students, faculty, and curriculum of the modern university, and he is even willing to criticize some aspects of modernism itself. There are,

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however, sticking points, particularly religion. Bloom, like so many others of his philosophical sect — the unworthy disciples of the late Leo Strauss — are stuck in one of Condorcet's earlier phases of progress, the stage at which philosophy replaces religion. Religion, for Bloom, is irrational superstition masquerading as truth, and it is the philosopher's role to combat error on this right flank while at the same time giving battle to philosophy's successor, science, on the left. It is all rather quaint and 18th-centuryish.

The trouble with the defenders of the so-called "traditional curriculum" is that they are all reformers who refuse to recognize that a revolution took place at the beginning of this century, and any attempt to preserve or improve the status quo is worse than futile. We do not need reform, we need a counterrevolution. Caution and moderation will only get in the way. It is better for the ship of higher education to sink, with all its rats on board. Any effort to preserve or improve American universities will only confirm the government-backed monopoly.

Most reformers labor under the delusion that the federal government can be used to fix things up. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Government may regulate, but it cannot create and it cannot innovate. Above all, government can never undo its mistakes, except at the point of a gun or at the bottom of an empty cash register. Government's first motto is "Never apologize, never explain."

The federal government's efforts at curriculum reform are utterly predictable. The U.S. Department of Education has its own model curriculum for a James Madison High School, and back in October the admirable Mrs. Cheney unveiled her own *50 Hours: A Core Curriculum for College Students*. This model includes, in addition to two whole years of foreign languages, three semesters of World Civ. from Moses and Homer to Richard Wright but also including that Mayan masterpiece, Popol Vuh, and a one-year course on the glories of the social sciences. There is room for everything and everyone in the NEH's curriculum; everything, that is, but a serious grounding in our own civilization.

Such a grounding is not something to be acquired from reading a handbook or parroting the platitudes of Western values. Conservatives are fond of quoting T.S. Eliot by way of Russell Kirk on the importance of the permanent things. We complain, with considerable justification, about the decline in all our cultural standards. The first step, then, is to quit complaining and work hard at exemplifying the highest standards of our civilization. Civilization, like charity, begins at home, and the time has come for conservatives to clean their own house.

Who has not heard story after story about conservative leaders who bought or "arranged" their doctorates, who were found guilty of plagiarism, perjury, or fraud? Perhaps this explains the new popularity that Dr. Martin Luther King enjoys among Big Government conservatives. The "Doctor" should now be understood as strictly a courtesy title, since King, it has been recently revealed, apparently plagiarized his Boston University doctoral dissertation. King's phoney Ph.D. is enough to make him a hero to at least one self-described "progressive" conservative foundation executive who bought his degree from a storefront diploma mill in Florida and now passes on academic grants that add up to millions every year. It is people like this who today control the conservative movement. If conservatives are serious about upholding the permanent things, then they should see to it that those who are holding this banner do not, by their character, incompetence, and behavior, disgrace it.

No sensible person should take sides in this battle between radical progressives and progressive conservatives. But there are two goals — both of them probably impossible — toward which we could direct our efforts in the confidence that we would not be wasting our energies, two goals that are so worthy in themselves that any regress — no matter how slight — in their direction would confer some lasting benefit. The first goal is strictly reactionary: restore the classical curriculum of the 19th century and beef it up with a suitable amount of math and science courses. As a practical measure, this would involve reinstituting an A.B. degree of the type I had to endure at Charleston College in the 1960's. In the current context, this would mean offering a special degree certifying that each recipient had received a certain amount of Greek and Latin, say 36 or 40 hours, as well as a roughly similar number of hours in his major.

The advantages of a classical A.B. are too numerous and obvious to mention. For one thing, it would mean an English or history major could once again hold his own in the company of chemistry and math students. Fashionable law schools and top medical schools would begin giving preference to A.B.'s, because they had demonstrated a capacity for hard work and an appreciation of the power of snobbery in American professional life. The possibilities are endless.

The A.B. is impossible, some will say, and the classics cannot be revived for political reasons. Surely there must be an alternative. There is: it is called deregulation, the second goal, which goes by the road of anarchism rather than reaction. Since the days of President Eliot, educators have been talking about the needs of the students. We are always being told, in the case of dress codes, co-ed dormitories, and campus cultural events, that students are mature men and women who know what they want. Fine, then, let them have it. Abolish all university-wide restrictions and do away with tenure. Turn each faculty member into an independent contractor, something like a paperboy, who is not paid a fixed salary but a commission for every paper he sells on his route. Teachers who are popular for whatever reason — for their sex appeal, their low standards, or even for their merits as scholars and teachers — would be paid commensurate with the number of students they attracted. Others would starve.

The students, of course, would have to learn to accept responsibility for their own lives, that is, assuming they wanted to go to a professional school. They would not, for the most part, sign up for many courses in American literature or film appreciation, but then those "Lite College" courses (all the credit hours with only half the content) are increasingly dominated by Marxists, feminists, and other radicals. In a Free University, decent American kids would no longer have to sit through boring rants on what it was like in the 60's. Even a classical A.B. might turn out to have a fighting chance in a free-market system. ◇

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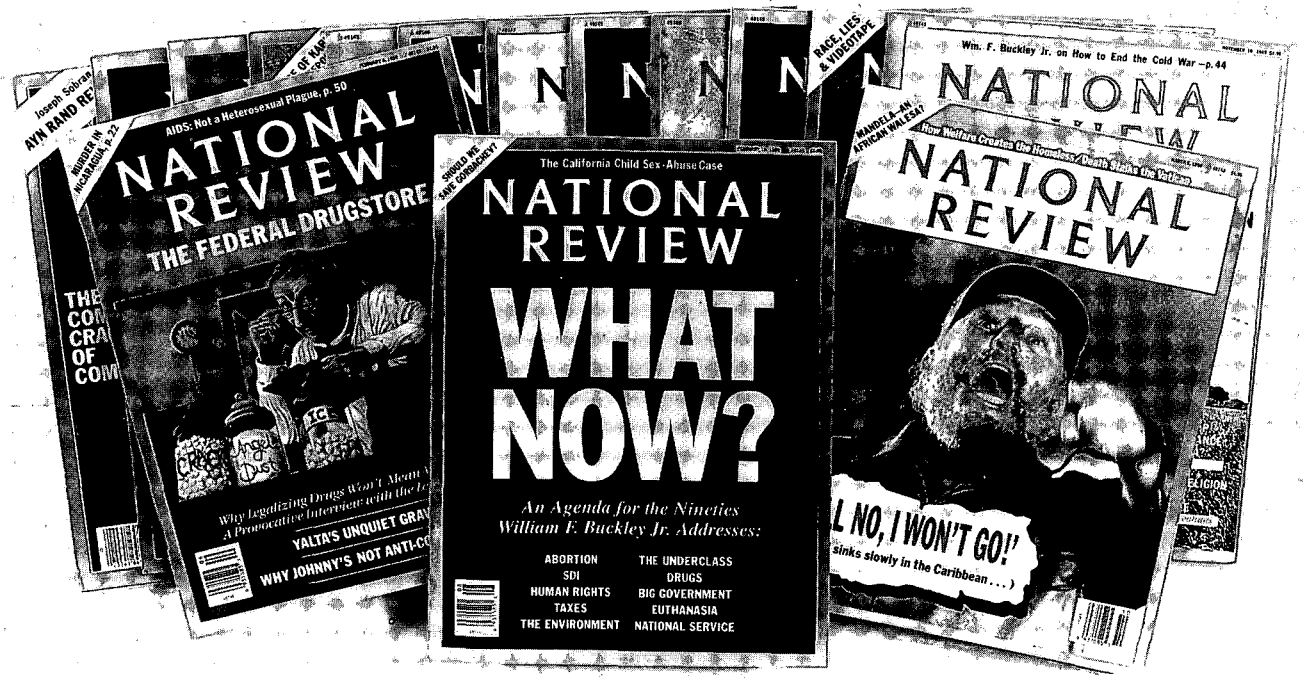

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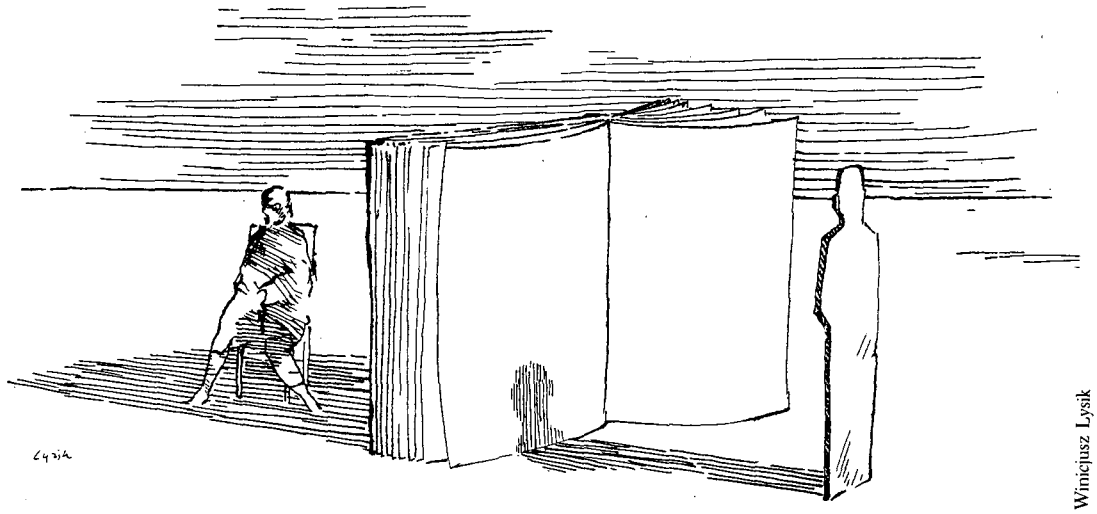

Winicjusz Lysik

Another Part of the Forest

by E.D. Hirsch, Jr.

Just after receiving an invitation from the editor of *Chronicles* to write about the college humanities curriculum, I received a letter from a friend and ally in education reform. It expressed alarm that "I had gone over to the other side" — an opinion that started, according to his letter, when I declined to label myself a conservative in a Williams College symposium on the humanities. My reluctance was reported as craven apostasy by Roger Kimball in the *New Criterion*, and reprinted in his book *Tenured Radicals: How Politics Has Corrupted Our Higher Education*. My friend's comment about the "other side" indicates succinctly the embattled mind-set in which the great curriculum wars over the preservation of our culture are now being fought. In this wartime atmosphere, declining to be labeled a conservative and "going over to the other side" are synonymous acts.

Within the space of a few weeks I was attacked from both sides of the battle lines with equal vigor, by Barbara Herrnstein Smith (a full-fledged "tenured radical" at Duke University) and by Roger Kimball (the bane of tenured radicals). The former scorned me as a conservative, the latter as an apostate and coward — possibly morally worse than the tenured radicals themselves. A special place in hell is reserved for trimmers.

In the current debate over the humanities curriculum, what is at stake may not be salvation but complexity. I freely grant that there comes a moment in political and intellectual affairs when complex and hesitant middle positions are unacceptable, and one has to choose sides in a shooting war. But it is a grave mistake to believe we have reached that point in the cultural debates in this country. Moreover, from the standpoint of education reform, which is my main concern, this polarization of positions, if persisted in, could deny the conservative point of view any substantive influence over the course that reform will take, as I shall momentarily explain.

But first I wish to deal with the connection between political polarization and apostasy. The subtext of my friend's letter was: "He who is not with me is against me, and he who *was* with me (as I thought), but denies it, is a kind of Judas." In this either/or atmosphere, the first casualties are subtlety and complexity. For example, take Mr. Kimball's description of my apostasy in the ideologically uncharged sphere of interpretation theory. It was my supposed "recantation" at Williams, as reported by Kimball, that has made my friend and others believe that the "pressure" has gotten to me, and I have gone over to the "other" side.

Kimball's account ran this way. I used to be an honorable defender of rationality and objectivity in literary scholarship. But now, to avoid unpopularity and the C-word, and to curry favor with the tenured radicals, I have abandoned my earlier positions and claim to hold views about interpretation that are scarcely to be distinguished from those of the tenured radicals themselves. Thus Kimball (in his book):

> For someone as desperate as Professor Hirsch to disencumber himself from the label conservative, it must have been galling to be reminded of his former sins — especially by Derrida, an enormously celebrated writer whose entire *oeuvre* stands in the most glaring contradiction to Professor Hirsch's own earlier ideas. Poor Professor Hirsch declared that people had once again been wrong to see him as a conservative, and then favored us with a little

E.D. Hirsch, Jr. is a professor of English at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, and author of Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know.

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self-exposition according to which the argument of *Validity in Interpretation* was scarcely to be distinguished from the kind of relativism espoused by Stanley Fish.

Note first in this account, the tell-tale polarity of the either/or positions: Hirsch's earlier ideas promoted objectivity and respect for the author's meaning, and all right-thinking persons should agree with him. These earlier Hirschian ideas are set against the currently fashionable relativism of Fish and Derrida, from whom the recanting apostate Hirsch can now scarcely be distinguished. Ignoring the fact that I have continued to attack Derrida and Fish, Kimball does not pause to consider the details of what I said at Williams, any more than he considers the argument I made in *Validity in Interpretation*, to which I still adhere. To him, it was enough for me to say that my views on interpretation are not "conservative." Bam! But, as I painstakingly explained to the audience in which Mr. Kimball sat, to call my views about interpretation "conservative" is not *inherently* objectionable to me; my objection was that to do so is simpleminded and untrue. As I wrote in *Validity in Interpretation* (which was at the time, in 1967, a much-attacked, antiestablishment book):

> There is nothing in the nature of the text itself which requires the reader to set up the author's meaning as his normative ideal. Any normative concept in interpretation implies a choice that is represented not by the nature of written texts but rather by the goal the interpreter sets himself. It is a weakness in many descriptions of the interpretive process that this act of choice is disregarded and the process described as though the object of interpretation were somehow determined by the ontological status of texts themselves [the view Kimball ascribes to the early Hirsch] . . . The defense of recognitive interpretation often assumes that something in the nature of the text requires the meaning to be the stable and determinate meaning of an author. But the object of interpretation is precisely that which cannot be defined by the ontological status of a text, since the distinguishing characteristic of a text is that from it not just one but many disparate complexes of meaning can be construed.

As I pointed out to Mr. Kimball and others at Williams, that argument is neither conservative nor liberal, but is compelled by empirical facts about language over which no ideology has control. I further pointed out that language *could* be otherwise, and indeed some artificial languages are. But natural languages, as a matter of empirical fact, are semantically indeterminate. Therefore no metaphysical or divine imperative can guide the principles of interpretation. All *that* was no doubt too complex to convey in the heady atmosphere of ideological warfare at Williams. Nonetheless, what I said was true, and it was certainly no recantation. The Williams event is paradigmatic. Truths are getting shot down when they find themselves between the trenches—particularly when they are complex or ideologically nonpartisan.

Let me pursue this train of thought into the college curriculum debates. When Thomas Fleming asked me to write for *Chronicles* he may have had in mind such topics as whether the fall of John Locke and the rise of Frantz Fanon in the core curriculum at Stanford heralds a domino effect, or whether it is perhaps an act of symbolic defiance on a par with the 60's male fashion of wearing long hair. By no means do I wish to evade that debate. Of *course* I believe it is absurd that students in one of the core strands at Stanford should be compelled to read Fanon instead of being compelled to read Locke. But that absurdity exists within a larger one, caused by miseducation in our schools: that adults should be compelled to study *anything* outside their areas of intellectual or professional interest.

I concede that even in different circumstances a case could be made for preserving distribution requirements for seventeen- and eighteen-year-olds, but I have also heard good arguments against this American tradition. It is a commonplace that European high-school graduates have already acquired the equivalent of our freshman and sophomore distribution requirements. In some nations that have good primary and secondary systems of education, university students aren't required to study anything they do not wish to study. These students, when they graduate from college, are not noticeably less broadly educated than American college graduates. In a proper educational system for adults, the act of offering or taking a college course should ideally be a contractual arrangement in a free market—with the teacher stating accurately in advance both what will be taught and what demanded.

By the time they matriculate, college students in the United States should already know that Locke influenced the thinking of Madison, Jefferson, and other founders of our political arrangements. They needn't know anything about Fanon. After a really good high-school education such as can be found in other countries, chemistry majors should not be compelled to pursue a deeper study of *either* Locke or Fanon unless they happen to have an interest in political theory. They should be encouraged, of course, to have broad interests and be given an opportunity to pursue them, but as Blake succinctly put it, "One law for lion and ox is oppression."

It is, of course, an evasion of my assignment simply to describe what colleges *ought* to be like. I am aware that American colleges and universities have had to become remedial institutions, and we must make the most of the situation. Our colleges, having been required to become finishing schools, should try to perform their remedial functions as well as they can. This is where a scheme like Lynne Cheney's *50 Hours: A Core Curriculum for College Students* is a useful guide. I have a great deal to say about what the college humanities curriculum should be under these current conditions, which I hope will be temporary, and much of what I have to say might appeal to conservative readers. But I do not want to preach to the converted on this subject, particularly as there is an issue of greater consequence to the humanities in higher education than the humanities curriculum itself—namely the humanities in *lower* education.

Consider simply in quantitative terms the educational importance of the Stanford core curriculum. If every

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Stanford student had to study the *same* core texts, which is not the case, the common core would occupy only about 8 percent of the student's college curriculum. Consider by contrast the humanities portion of the curriculum in *lower* education. The topics and ideas to be studied are almost all compulsory. In grades 1-6, the humanities component occupies about 70 percent of the curriculum. In grades 7 and 8, the percentage declines to about 60, and in high school to about 50 percent. In purely quantitative terms, early education in the humanities, contrasted with college, dominates by a ratio of 24 to 1. In *qualitative* terms the domination of early education is still greater with respect to determining values, habits, and principles. The die has been cast for many students before they come to college. For many others, who have been deprived of substance in high school, college humanities courses may be life-changing experiences. Yet the humanities in the colleges may exercise their greatest influence on the larger society through their influence on the humanities in lower education.

In this connection, conservatives' justifiable worry regarding the college humanities curriculum is that left-wing anti-Americanism, hiding under the banner of "multiculturalism," will corrupt the teachers of the future, and thus, in time, the whole of American culture. I share this concern to a degree, though I also have faith in the oedipal resilience of the young, who are always mounting their own oppositions to current dogma. How else explain young Mr. Kimball? These mavericks should be given every encouragement. The tendency of the "tenured radicals" to decrease intellectual diversity (even while advocating it) should be strongly resisted. Moreover, I have been concerned about the way the separatist rhetoric of multiculturalism has begun to filter into the schools, and I have written about the dangers of tribalism and the corresponding virtues of true cosmopolitanism. Subsequently I found that Diane Ravitch had devised still better phrasing for the same distinction: particularism vs. pluralism. I believe it is the duty of both liberals and conservatives to make pluralism and cosmopolitanism prevail over tribalism and particularism.

But this is a subtle distinction, and subtlety in these matters is in serious if not critical danger. Let me provide another example. I am currently trying to gain broad-based agreement about the specific contents of a core curriculum in grades 1-6—a core that would constitute about half of the whole curriculum and that might be accepted in all regions of the country. The aims of this project are multiple. Some are technical ones, intent on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Others are cultural, and are aimed at, among other things, preserving and restoring American literate culture. My colleagues and I have been working for four years on this project, consulting widely with teachers and scholars. Last March we held a conference of elementary teachers, principals, and superintendents from every region of the country, and reached agreement about the specifics of the core.

I then applied to a foundation to support the piloting of this core in Dade County, which has a large, diverse, and well-run school district. I received word from the foundation that one liberal reviewer of the proposed curriculum worried that it was not multicultural enough. A conservative reviewer had the opposite worry—that I had sold out to the multiculturalists, and had "gone over to the other side." This person bridled particularly at an item labeled "forced removal" in first-grade social studies. The term meant that first graders were to be told that European settlers made the Indians leave their regular hunting grounds and go elsewhere. To include that item was to the conservative reviewer a symbol of the apostasy that Kimball had detected. Once again an embattled mentality had induced polarization, and a certain lack of subtlety.

But subtlety is a commodity that is badly needed by conservatives who are interested in education reform. Consider the following political facts. There are over two million teachers in the National Education Association. There are over half a million teachers in the American Federation of Teachers. There are over a hundred and thirty thousand members of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). There are several thousand education professors in some eleven hundred colleges of education. These are the people who will ultimately find ways to make or break any proposed educational reform. It will be difficult to make a teacher *not* teach first graders that Europeans sent the Indians away from their hunting grounds, if that is what these teachers want to teach. I am told that over 80 percent of schoolteachers are politically liberal. By and large, these teachers are not raving particularists or tribalists, but they *have* decided that some degree of multiculturalism is a good thing, and perhaps a political necessity. Anyone who wishes to gain the necessary cooperation of these teachers in developing a core curriculum for the schools will have to introduce multicultural elements into the core curriculum.

Consider, by contrast, the consequences of bravely holding the line, and excluding "forced removal" along with elements of Hispanic, Indian, and Afro-American culture from the core curriculum. Your courage would only be appreciated by those few in education who think exactly as you do. More importantly, your core would not be accepted. You would have avoided "apostasy," but you would have exerted no influence on what children are taught. By default, the curriculum would go back to the professionals of the ASCD, who have already fragmented the early curriculum and given it a decidedly liberal-left slant under the banner of "critical thinking."

Is there, then, no room for subtlety and complexity in the curriculum debates? I suggest that a wartime mentality regarding the humanities curriculum is self-defeating. The *only* way cultural conservatives, of which I count myself one, can influence the humanities curriculum in the schools is to support the right kind of multiculturalism themselves. For it is only in the rarified corridors of higher education that embattled conservatives and embattled tenured radicals can afford to choose sides and fight to the death. In the groves of academe, it sometimes seems that the two parties *need* each other; whom else would they have as objects of scorn and indignation? But outside the academy, and in the schools, most people wear the uniform of neither army. They are in mufti or in motley, and the bullets are flying far off, in another part of the forest.

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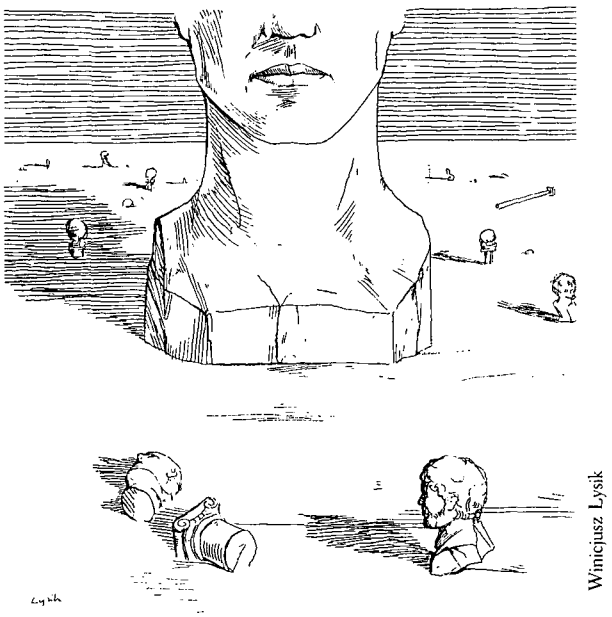
Academics, Therapists, and the German Connection

by Paul Gottfried



For several years now a heated debate has been going on over Western civilization and humanities requirements at some distinguished universities, most notably Stanford. The debate has brought up the question of a justification—or lack thereof—for forcing students into a sequence of courses devoted exclusively to Western thought. It has been argued, correctly, that thinkers featured in such courses are preponderantly white and male. Critics complain that such an obligatory program of study perpetuates the mistaken notion that Western white male heterosexuals (pick your own term of opprobrium) have produced the only works that deserve to be studied. Those who raise this charge, mind you, are not devotees of the *Analects* of Confucius or of the *Bhagavad Gita*. The lists for alternative, non-Western, or neglected thinkers that have been brought to my attention consist, for the most part, of feminists (either real or alleged), Third World revolutionaries like Frantz Fanon, and advocates of black power. One such list now being circulated at Stanford combines a few serious non-Western and female authors with explicit ideologues once celebrated by the 60's New Left.

In the face of this challenge to Western thought, some academics have come forth to speak for the "humanities." A National Association of Scholars has been organized by Stephen Balch, Peter Shaw, and other concerned intellectuals, who are troubled by academic abuses and by the attack on "Western" learning. In its publication, *Academic Questions*, the NAS has documented the ideological restrictions suffered by professors who challenge leftist dogmas in either the social sciences or the humanities. The same group has made an effort to defend scholars (such as Michael Levin of City University of New York) who have been professionally harassed for taking seriously inherent gender and racial differences. It has also treated positively the by-now controversial scholarship of Stanley Rothman, who has defended the predictive value of IQ tests.

The NAS has no less passionately stressed the link between ideological intolerance and the current academic war against Western civilization. Its members have weighed in behind the campaign to keep required Western humanities courses in the undergraduate curriculum at Stanford. Like former Assistant Secretary of Education Chester Finn, the NAS characterizes the American academic community as "an island of repression in a sea of freedom." It believes that its own conception of Western learning must be impressed on that community in order to make professors and their students more like other, presumably free, Americans.

While much of the work undertaken by the NAS is useful, especially the defense of honest research, the crusade it is now waging on behalf of the "humanities" may be more

Paul Gottfried is a professor of humanities at Elizabethtown College in Pennsylvania and the author, with Thomas Fleming, of The Conservative Movement, *among other books.*

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problematic. The teaching of the humanities did not suddenly become politicized in the 60's and 70's. This interpretation of the academic world, popularized in, among other places, Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*, is tied to another fiction: that the American government was temporarily derailed in the late 60's when the McGovernites seized the Democratic Party. Thereafter, it is claimed, moderate progressives had to fight to gain back control of the American political mainstream, a task completed in the "Reagan Revolution" of the 80's.

Finn, who accepts this view, believes that the American people have undergone at least the beginnings of democratic redemption; all that remains to be done is to open the academy to the same process. In a revealing essay for the *American Spectator* in November 1986, Finn stresses the need to combine "cultural literacy" with Judeo-Christian ethics and democratic value-instruction in preparation for a "conservative" reform of education. He also advocates the celebration of a patriotic calendar, singling out for veneration the figure of Martin Luther King, Jr. In a subsequent letter exchange with William Hawkins, Jr., Finn rebuked his respondent for suggesting that one can be "culturally literate" without believing intensely in democracy. Hawkins had noted the absence of proof that Shakespeare, Bach, or Homer believed in either democracy or equality. Finn's stated refusal to "engage in any discussion" with a nondemocratic infidel or a critic of democracy was more than an expression of peeve. It indicates the firm design of some who now call for "cultural literacy" and the "humanities" to use the present educational debate for their own political ends.

A predecessor of the NAS, which claimed some of the same leadership and funding, was the Campus Coalition for Democracy of the mid-80's. Led by Herbert London and Stephen Balch, the CCD defended the humanities and Western civilization against their academic detractors. Both were linked in publications to "American democratic values" and to "scientific methods," which were further identified with the thinking of Sidney Hook. Hook approached the terms in question from a Deweyite and social democratic world view and considered learning as "instrumental" to the achievement of a particular society.

Not only these groups but the expanding American bureaucratic state and its social science consultants have worked to put all Americans on the side of "democracy." The American Commissioner of Education, John Ward Studebaker, who was appointed by FDR in 1934, viewed as his own charge the creation of a pro-democratic public educational system. Studebaker's announced goals coincided with those of the social planner and philosopher John Dewey and immensely pleased the first lady, though not her husband, who considered national education planning entirely within the framework of vocational retraining. Since the 30's, then, indoctrination in democracy has been deemed necessary to protect Americans against "totalitarianism." The good fight against fascism and Red fascism made it necessary to strengthen our democratic fiber at home. Toward this end, we were to make our society transparent to educational reformers. The discovery of the "authoritarian personality" by German radical émigrés offered new proof that the seeds of fascist totalitarianism were within us. Educating for democracy meant that each of us had to undergo a cathartic learning process through which "democratic values" could take the place of others, including Sidney Hook's lifelong nemesis (which Dewey also criticized in *A Common Faith*): traditional religious beliefs. The Columbia University Teachers College Professor James L. Mursell wrote a book in 1934 that was later widely distributed, *Principles of Education*, in which democracy itself was proclaimed to be a "faith." It was an "ethical faith" that had to be systematically inculcated, that was inconsistent with "group and clique differentiation, and once properly taught resulted in a certain type of social order and of political arrangements."

A work that sums up the old democratic progressive view of education, despite its appeal to the "classics," is Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*. A Straussian associate of the neoconservatives and a New Deal-Humphrey Democrat, Bloom exemplifies the moderate left educationism now at war with its more radical descendant. Throughout his book, Bloom speaks of the pollution of American higher learning caused by the "German connection." Anti-democratic Teutonic figures, particularly Nietzsche, Weber, and Heidegger, are destroying liberal democracy. It is the academy, Bloom insists, that must be in the forefront of the struggle for democracy and rationalism. But academics, who have suffered contamination from popularized Teutonic ideas, are making the general culture even less resistant to antidemocratic forces. Meanwhile professors have ceased to demand for themselves the "special status" befitting the defenders of rationality. Liberal democracy, according to Bloom, can only flourish if the university has "an exemption from the ordinary moral and political limitations on what can be thought and said in civil society."

It has been observed with justification that Bloom praises democratic equality except in his own backyard. He tries to avoid inconsistency by saying more than once that the progress of equality depends on professional privilege. Beyond this problem, however, another vexing question can be raised about Bloom's view of the relationship between democracy and education. How can political theory, which Bloom equates with philosophy, move beyond the limitations of a democratic civil society when the only thought that he is willing to tolerate is of a "democratic" kind? He insists the university should be an extension of the Enlightenment; a resource for teaching democracy and rationalism. Among its heroes should be the Anglophile French aristocrat Montesquieu, that defender of property holders John Locke, and the architect of the sovereign state Thomas Hobbes, all of whom Bloom presents as enlightened thinkers who tried to give "political status to what Socrates represented." By some vague line of association Socrates is made into a precursor of the Bloomian vision of the good life, a religion of democratic equality served by an academic priesthood with a special social status.

Because universities were not sufficiently dedicated to this project (argues Bloom), they succumbed to dangerous antidemocratic thinking. In the face of the "German missionaries and intermediaries" rampant in our culture, Bloom offers this stern homily: "And when we Americans speak seriously about politics, we mean that our principles of freedom and equality and the rights based on them are

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rational and everywhere applicable." He then goes on to observe that World War II "was an educational project undertaken to force those who do not accept these principles to do so."

Such support for political missionizing suggests that Bloom and those who praise his work are not disinterested humanists. Their attacks on the Germans as the enemies of democratic education simply rehash ideas and prejudices put forth by John Dewey during both World Wars. Dewey railed at Kant and Hegel as representatives of authoritarian ethics and of an antidemocratic political tradition. Like Bloom, Dewey had favored taking German influences out of the academic curriculum in the name of building his own conception of American democracy.

Other recent defenses of the Western humanities curriculum have been at least equally tendentious. Both William Bennett and Lynne Cheney, for example, defend the teaching of Western thinkers in order to put into relief the genius of Martin Luther King, Jr. Cheney, in a recent Hillsdale speech, deplored the fact that most American youth had never read King's "Letter From the Birmingham Jail," which is ranked in order of moral and cultural importance with the works of Shakespeare and Dante. The Christian mystic Clement of Alexandria extolled Plato and his disciples as "*paidagogountes eis Christon*," teachers leading others to the anointed Savior. In *50 Hours: A Core Curriculum for College Students*, Dr. Cheney proposes her own educational path to salvific truth. In phrases recalling those of her predecessor at NEH, Mr. Bennett, she stresses the real "benefits" offered to students by the study of Plato, Dante, Shakespeare, and other Western luminaries: "King's work makes this point with particular force. He cited Jefferson's words and Locke's to argue the cause of civil rights: he quoted Greek philosophers, British poets, and German theologians."

Neither Lynne Cheney nor feminist homophiles at Stanford have been the first, to be sure, to treat the humanities as a political football. The humanist scholar Irving Babbitt at the beginning of the century directed the same charge against Harvard President Charles William Eliot and at Eliot's counterpart at Princeton, Woodrow Wilson. Both university presidents had linked education to "public service" while introducing at their institutions a new emphasis on the administrative sciences. Babbitt complained that their policies would turn academic learning from the goal of ethical self-mastery into an instrument of power. The national administration of Woodrow Wilson — who hoped as an educator to save the young from thralldom to their parents' irrational beliefs — confirmed Babbitt's worst fears. It also saw an emerging fateful alliance between republican government and a rising class of public administrators.

By the 1990's it may be impossible to depoliticize the academy and the humanistic curriculum as an undergraduate rite of passage. If the study of philosophy is, as Socrates states (and as a neo-Platonist I fully agree), "a concern about death" and the fate of the soul, then both Lynne Cheney and her opponents are debating about something far less important. It is not even the teaching of the humanities that is presently at stake, in a sense that would have been intelligible to an earlier generation, as the transmission of a specific culture that was deemed fitting for a Western gentleman or lady. Today's debate centers on which names and phrases are most appropriate for mouthing at cocktail parties or for defending the welfare state democracy into which our republic has stumbled. It is a battle between the partisans of Sidney Hook and Jesse Jackson, no longer one between Athens and Jerusalem or between the ancients and moderns.

It is frequently asserted that required humanities courses can help train our citizens in democratic self-government. But, alas, Americans have ceased to govern themselves, even if they still "participate" in carefully staged electoral events with the sufferance of public administrators. In the late 19th century, at a time when most Americans received only a few years of schooling, communities did look after themselves while the country abounded in humanities scholars. Nowadays, as is made clear in *To Reclaim a Legacy: A Report on the Humanities in Higher Education*, published by Bennett as NEH director in November 1984, the humanities are seen to promote not self-government but the newer political ideal of pluralism. The study of great books is proposed in order to acquaint us with those "ideas so revolutionary in their time yet so taken for granted now" that have become "the glue that holds together a pluralistic nation."

The study of humanities will go forth in spite of such fustian. They will flourish if people study them in earnest and encourage their children to do so. But they will certainly not benefit from being inflicted on the young in a superficial form, as political dogma. Even now the humanities continue to be seriously pursued at the best Catholic and Protestant institutions of learning and among small, dedicated groups elsewhere. This is exactly as it should be. Not everyone is meant to be a philosopher or to transmit the wisdom of the past. To his discredit, the philosopher Martin Heidegger advocated a politicized imitation of humanistic education during his involvement with the Third Reich. Some of his American critics now urge us to fight Heidegger's "fascist" values by using his techniques: by making the humanities into the vehicle of a global democratic or feminist egalitarian agenda. Whatever the political goals, reducing philosophical learning to militant ideology is reprehensible.

There is one battle, however, that conservative academics should be waging at the present time: defending that aspect of the "German connection" known as *Lehrfreiheit*. The pursuit of research in one's discipline without ideological harassment is the defining activity of the academic scholar. It is also one now being threatened by the therapeutic state and its terrorist allies on American campuses. In the name of sensitivity and victimology, scholarly and social exchanges have become suspect activities in major universities. According to a recently published Carnegie report on higher education, over sixty university presidents interviewed favor the introduction of more extensive restrictions on speaking and writing among faculties and students. Such restrictions are intended to protect the sensitivities of designated victim groups, particularly blacks, gays, and feminists. The defense of *Lehrfreiheit* is a moral cause that all nonpolitical academics should hasten to embrace. It is also one that does not degrade the humanities.

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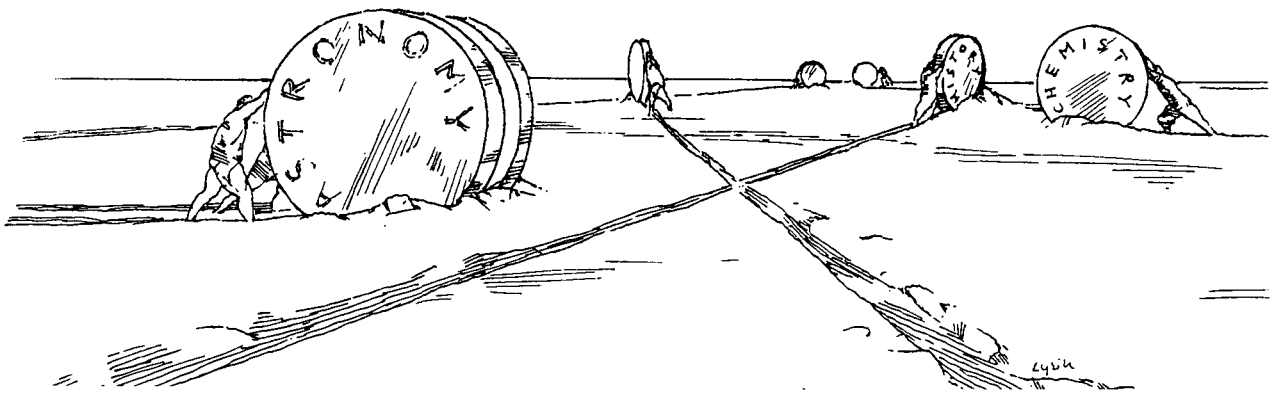
The Teaching of Humanities and Other Trivia

by Thomas Molnar



Winiciusz Lysik

"Humanities" is Western society's name for the academic expression of its fundamental values. There are other branches of learning—medicine, law, engineering, and business, all of which benefit from the humanities—but only the "liberal arts" reflect a society's soul, central beliefs, highest aspirations, and ultimately its culture. Yet during the last half-century America has witnessed the degradation of the ideal expressed by a humanistic curriculum.

Such has been my conviction since the late 1950's when, after a decade of teaching, I wrote *The Future of Education*. My view of American education was so dim that I never considered writing another book on the subject. Why indeed try to "improve" and even discuss something so hopelessly mediocre, something resembling not so much education as conditioning and brainwashing? Though I have continued to teach, I have never been stimulated in an American classroom, never felt that ineffable excitement that contact with informed intelligences or simply eager minds always brings.

The anti-elite often argues that nowadays classroom instruction counts for less than the pop culture absorbed from magazines, concerts, museums, and television. This is true insofar as classroom instruction, with its audio-visual aids and other tricks, has become a poor shadow of what it should be. But classroom teaching, with its irreplaceable relationship between human beings, remains central to learning. Unfortunately, I only find it done successfully abroad.

In this country, the poverty of the classroom has not changed since 1950, the year I began to teach. Like-minded friends try to convince me that the situation in the schools has worsened. Except for manners and security, it is only just as bad. Those raw intelligences I do still occasionally find have been corrupted by the criminally lazy habits acquired in high school from frivolous courses and uncultured teachers. But students in the 50's were just as unprepared and uninterested as they are today, and my colleagues, then and now, have endlessly debated at futile meetings such questions as, "Why do we teach?" and "What is excellence?" I told one man back in 1951 that he should not be teaching if he doesn't know why he chose the profession—end of discussion.

I have always believed that teaching is a vocation second only to the priesthood. But in the academy all I have found is hypocrisy, silly slogans, ideological conformity, and a thinly disguised greed for money that is wrapped in high-sounding jargon. I know of no profession as conformist and cowardly as teaching. How can an educator transmit the love of knowledge and respect for moral intelligence? Anguished colleagues ask me how to avoid being given bad grades by students (the grades received from little ignoramuses may blacken their files and block promotion), but when I tell them simply to refuse to play such a humiliating game, they recoil in horror as if I had suggested that they commit a crime. (These are the people who condemn Russians and Germans for not standing up to their totalitarian governments.)

America is interested mainly in money-making and its auxiliary occupations such as publicity and the media; purely cultural education is something extra and is regarded as a luxury. We want schools to teach "excellence" as we want our cars to have a shiny finish. But we borrow the word from business, not from culture, knowledge, refined literary taste, and philosophical conversation. Are there outstandingly cultured citizens? Of course there are. But only because at age 25 or 35 they understood that the system had cheated them all along. They work hard to catch up. Quite a few succeed, but they know better than to return to the classroom to teach. Even the best professors would leave if it were not for tenure and other, often lavish, benefits. Students, colleagues, and the academic atmosphere are not the reasons they stay.

What about the Jacques Barzuns, the Allan Blooms, and the other ritual *pleureuses* who, at regular intervals, bemoan that education, and with it the "house of the intellect," is in hopeless disrepair? Johnny can't read (not even as a Harvard

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Thomas Molnar's latest book is Twin Powers: Politics and the Sacred.

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freshman), Johnny couldn't care less when the Civil War was fought, and older John, by now ambassador or President, confuses Bucharest and Warsaw. The true reasons for this state of affairs are—intentionally—never discussed, only the symptoms are listed with much simulated indignation and gratuitous prediction of better times ahead.

In May Mrs. Lynne Cheney, chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, gave (at Hillsdale College) one of those neither-fish-nor-fowl speeches that our officials so love. She listed some appalling percentages of ignorance, in history, literature, language, science. But she offered not one word of political or sociological analysis why this is so; not a hint of what the causes are or who's to blame. Only gratuitous lamentation and empty rhetoric. A shaman from Siberia would better scrutinize the cause-and-effect relationship of why our liberal arts education is the laughing stock of the world, and why American students abroad are dismissed as ignoramuses, why they consistently rate the lowest.

The reasons are several: society's and the academy's lack of interest in serious knowledge and the life of the mind as the highest ideal, even though only a very few can adopt it (ah, but democracy is for all . . .); refusal of any effort that does not wield immediate and tangible results; and the schools' openness to whatever irrelevancy the ideologues and the merchants bring in. Even today, when modernism and American influence are ruining Europe's schools, their level is infinitely higher than that of the best in our country. Last time I was in France I talked with a twelve-year-old boy in the first year of the *lycée*. His curriculum was the same as mine was in two countries of Eastern Europe, fifty-some years ago (thank God, no progress!). Greek and Latin, English and German, a weekly five hours of French composition and literature, history and geography, mathematics and physics, music, drawing, and gymnastics. Compare that with our college students' curriculum, exposed to the psycho-pedagogues' tender mercies, taking only four courses for fear their psyches and social schedules may suffer. John Gray of Oxford writes that after a recent lecture at a Polish university students asked him to comment on the quality of their studies. He was impressed enough to advise them not to make changes, certainly not through an imported curriculum from the West. Strange as it may sound, forty years of a Marxist regime could not destroy school programs there the way NEH directives and the teachers' colleges have in the United States.

Not only Europe and Japan, but also Argentina and Chile are far ahead of us in the art of forming cultured individuals, although for managerial training their sons swarm to Harvard Business School and for science they go to MIT and Stanford Medical School. What is missing in the humanities that is present in technical education? Perhaps it is the inability of our educational system to develop and then impose a common discourse that would allow people to talk and understand each other, to stimulate each other, to commune in the same beauty and truth—and, at higher levels, to expel the trivia that clutter mass-discourse in a mass-democracy.

The closest American students come to this humanistic ideal is when, after a suitably abundant display of democratic-pluralistic scruples, a college introduces a "core curriculum" in the humanities. Such is the bare minimum for cultural literacy, we are told—immediately raising the question of why humanities students should be content with a bare minimum when physicians and atomic engineers reach for the maximum? But even this minimum rarely survives being cut down and retailored by the "experts," or kicked out by student-power. The consequence of this scrapbook approach to learning is that one student learns a few things about the *Baghavad Gita*, another about ecology, the third about female rights in Outer Mongolia. What will they talk about? Sex and rock.

Americans regard liberal arts studies in Europe and elsewhere as programs of elitist societies. This is totally false: that European students are almost completely subsidized by the state will simply not register in American minds. Theirs is the proletarian's response to the practice of selecting by talent, hard work, and achievement: if X has been selected, X is a fascist. The democrat knows only what is necessary for business and social intercourse. The rest is nonsense at best, and perhaps suspect, too.

Some say, ritually of course, that there are bright spots here and there, one school in the Bronx, another in Denver. Bennett's last report as Education secretary tried to be optimistic, but the most recent Cavazos report admits we have hit bottom. "America's business is business"—everything else is merely tolerated, and then only insofar as it can justify itself before the high court of pluralism and egalitarian democracy. If humanistic education can hardly have gotten worse than it was 34 years ago when I published *The Future of Education*, it is only because a vacuum cannot lose substance.

In such an atmosphere, even bright students sitting around a bright professor in the blessed isolation of their seminar room—optimal conditions—come to feel their superfluity, their lack of importance. Can minds be thus shaped, insights prompted, scholarly habits implanted and cultivated? It is difficult when society so belittles learning and so rewards the shallow, the loud, and the primitive.

I repeat that the situation described here has not changed since the 1950's. American education has always followed the prevailing winds, and the general deterioration of society has made these winds increasingly poisonous. When I first became a teacher, I was amazed at the freedom that business enjoyed on campus and in classes. Later I was not so surprised when the businessman's place was taken by the ideologue, later still by the revolutionary. Now, in the 90's, the campus lives under the signs of sex, violence, feminism, racial tensions. The ultimate culprit is perhaps the notion that the university is not a place for selected minds (no matter from what social class or race), but for all invaders and idlers, no matter how frivolous, obscene, or vulgar, from the publicity stunt-man to the sexologist and the drug dealer. If *this* is freedom and education, then the liberal arts must indeed fail, because their vocation is much narrower: freeing the mind and the soul for higher pursuits. The reorganization of the schools, the appointment of miracle men, the budgeting of billions of dollars are only cheap tricks, acts of a hypocritical society. Our entire value system needs to be turned around, a *metanoia*. And that is a futile dream. ◈

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Education and Community

by James B. Graves

"Truths would you teach, or save a sinking land?
All fear, none aid you, and few understand."
—Alexander Pope

Liberal Arts and Community: The Feeding of the Larger Body
by Marion Montgomery
Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press; 171 pp., $27.50

Virtue and Modern Shadows of Turning: Preliminary Agitations
by Marion Montgomery
Lanham, Maryland: The Intercollegiate Studies Institute, Inc., and University Press of America; 186 pp., $29.25 (hardcover), $14.25 (paper)

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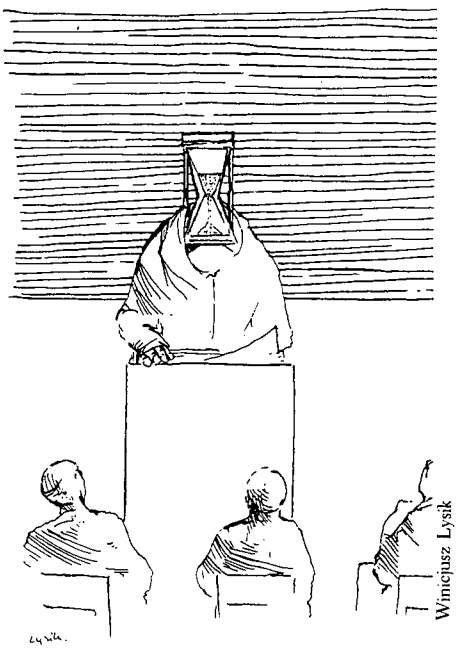
Poet, critic, and teacher Marion Montgomery is known to have taken a fortnight's break from a book project *in order to write another book*! Ever since coming out a few years ago with the *Prophetic Poet and the Spirit of the Age*, his landmark trilogy tracing the origin of our present malaises through literature, history, philosophy, theology, and ancillary fields, the pace of this man's work has only accelerated. It seems just yesterday that Montgomery published *The Trouble with You Innerleckchuls*, which followed hard on the heels of *Possum, and Other Receits for the Recovery of "Southern" Being*, which followed . . . well, you get the point. All the same, I was startled to receive copies of the new titles named above—in the same week.

Of course, though, it is Montgomery's habit of achieving bedrock penetration, along with stylistic finish, in one rapidly composed volume after another that sets him apart as such an important writer and critical thinker. That plus the good will, good humor, and good principles characteristically shining through his pages. Marion Montgomery leaves you with a feeling of rightly taken good cheer—even after explaining all you didn't know about how bad things really are in 1990.


Wincjusz Lysik

Liberal Arts and Community grew out of talks Montgomery gave at Erskine College, in upcountry South Carolina, where he addressed, respectively, students, faculty, and finally alumni and townspeople on the rescue of "community through a recovery of liberal arts as supportive of community." Here is the analysis of our contemporary educational ills that finally reaches the perimeters and bottom of this ever-so-big and growing problem.

But since *Liberal Arts and Community* represents, among other things, a bold *rhetorical* achievement (in an age that despises rhetoric because materialism has led us to hate the necessary connection between form and substance), we should first consider the consciously rhetorical thrust this poet has given his eminently practical book. (If this surprises you, just recall what marvelous rhetoricians Vergil and Milton were.) For though the text here is considerably amplified, Montgomery retains the oratorical features of his original presentations.

Never mind that contemporary speeches are notoriously banal when reduced to unforgiving type. The "live" effect gained by putting these addresses into print only underscores what Montgomery calls "the decisive importance of words rightly taken" and his repeated stress on individual responsibility for bearing witness to truth.

Here the march of facts and analysis is made to sparkle with sympathetic asides, apt instances, and rich variation of diction and tone, engaging and rendering benevolent the speaker's various audiences, as is rhetoric's initial aim. With appropriate respect, Montgomery talks "up" to the students to whom he has been given this one opportunity for providing right instruction and exhortation. With colleagues, he is (in his self-effacing manner) more blunt. And to the townsmen, who are rightly chary of professors, he speaks as a neighbor, with reassurance that he defends the "Southern" (Montgomery shorthand for "permanent and universal") verities they continue to hold as ideals.

Also enhancing persuasion, the

James B. Graves, a former classics professor, edits Lookout, *the national pro-family newsletter.*

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wholesome fabric of these talks is woven of Montgomery's always recognizable, deceptively informal prose, alive with metaphor and gentle irony, and punctuated by wonderful aphorisms. I have to show you just one:

> The failure to recognize the gift of particularity, the uniqueness of each person's particularity, the uniqueness of each person's actual existence as a limit to his potential being, is the present cause of most of the unhappiness in individuals and the cause of that chaos in society which prevents society from becoming community. It is an unhappiness, I regret to say, subscribed to by both the community and its institutions, both bearing false witness against the true nature of membership.

There, in a thimble, are arguments sufficient to overthrow entrenched egalitarianism and restore true community on the basis of individual worth.

Mainly, though, it's the writer's urgency for the recovery of ordinate love, that ordering catalyst through which right education and community must proceed and the goal towards which they must advance, which binds his arguments and lends them a warm cogency. Such force of conviction here functions as what the rhetoricians call ethical proof—a speaker's capacity to compel persuasion through (unstudied) projection of his character. ("I trust the man's words because I trust the man.") It was partly to acknowledge the efficacy of ethical proof that the ancients defined the authentic orator as "a good man skilled in speaking."

Note, too, how the presentation architectonically satisfies the title theme, progressing as it does from focus on students ("which each of us is insofar as we are rightly willed toward ourselves") and teachers ("as each of us is willy-nilly insofar as we bear witness of ourselves"); then on to members of the community at large ("in which proper relation we must, as intellectual creatures, continue active both as student and teacher").

Here is the *argumentum*, what Montgomery identifies to student-listeners as his "principal theme and song":

> . . . the decisive importance of words rightly taken to any perfection of one's heart and mind. A refrain to that song: Through the concert of heart and mind tuned by true words, we may move beyond our individual, separate aspirations and become aware that we hold humanity in common; so then we have a common—that is, a community—responsibility to words. We begin to understand, for instance, what St. Paul means when he says that we are members one of another. It is through words, through the signs we make one to another, that we discover ourselves bound one to another in a community larger than our private selves, larger than our lives taken only individually and independent of other lives.

Further:

> Developing one's ear and tongue to value meaning is what we call education. But one becomes educated, not only in a concert with his own mind and heart through words, but through that larger concert of members in the body of community, one's teachers and parents and neighbors and media gurus and politicos. Because most of these do not, in fact, accept responsibility for words as the community's inheritance, it makes your own responsibility the more difficult, makes it even more a responsibility, one with a moral obligation attached by your very act of professing to be a student.

From here Montgomery moves forward to catalogue, illustrate with the rhetorical *exempla*, and assess the failures of today's undergraduate education, starting with failures of the public schools that so commonly send students to college for two years of remedial work before higher education can significantly begin—which it usually doesn't even for juniors, because their professors are typically bemused with Deconstruction and other intellectual fads and are preoccupied with (otiose) publication and the games that lead to professional advancement in today's corrupt academy. The result is that education turns into indoctrination, or simply falls through the cracks of professorial indifference.

The ideological and cultural subversion, trivialization, and pompous semiliteracy that parents pay so dearly for—an item-by-item accounting of academic false witness—appears in Montgomery's exposé of the Babel that is the campus just down the road from your hearth and home: unrepentant 60's radicals using professorial chairs to batter the permanent things they ought, by definition, to support; gnostic mountebanks urging even that "we must reprogram nature" (!) while parading as dispassionate "scientists"; administrators murdering English without embarrassment on behalf of an aggrandizement that is inseparably personal and institutional ("the blueprint for this drive to excellence was laid more than a decade ago"); and curricula, now "redesigned and marketed in the interest of a product," and correspondingly debased to include things like a for-credit course in the "History of American Radio & Television" openly advertised as "a college course in trivia."

Chapter Four of *Liberal Arts and Community*, "A Scholastic Foray," serves as peroration. It's an addendum that draws on the writer's grasp of Western intellectual development to carry to a deeper level the meaning of the speeches. Here, among other salutary things, is terse analysis of the ills wrought by John Locke's sorcery about "Social Contract," which, in the name of enlightenment and liberalism, has so banefully pried individuals away from family and community and made them pawns of always bigger government and other impulses constantly spun off from the original Lockean heresy. It's what (ironically) keeps reducing particular people—formerly thought only a little lower than the angels—to ever smaller dimensions, steadily proliferating the numbers and kinds of intellectual and spiritual dead-ends people nowadays reach. Everything that goes swirling around John Locke's cauldron comes around the more viciously.

But Montgomery's conclusion is affirmative through inclusion of view-

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points reaching us by way of Dante, Aquinas, and some other unfashionable figures who are free of gnostic distortions. These viewpoints I will not attempt to summarize, having by hints and reductions already gone about as far towards reducing Marion Montgomery's whole and compelling creation to dry bones as Lockean theory has reduced children of God to trousered apes.

Here, again and at last, is the book we have needed to open to their deepest roots and widest ramifications the problems besetting contemporary education, the probing that has to precede authentic reform. But *Liberal Arts and Community* presents no blueprint, no detailed schema for reform, the Five Year Plan having no place in the Montgomery approach. So what are we to do? Why, read and learn about the ordinate love we must first apply to the basic problem—ourselves. Reform of institutions requires precisely this, being an organic and contagious undertaking that will proceed once we again start to feel ourselves members one of another.

Virtue and Modern Shadows of Turning complements *Liberal Arts and Community*. The old question re-examined here is: can virtue be taught? Well, no; education even in its broadest sense can't impart this. We are, here as elsewhere, fallen. Still, seeds of virtue and ordinate longing for virtue lie in every heart to quicken by primary action of will and grace—points precisely where formal learning about virtue can prove an auxiliary indeed to those seeking to know and to order the good, the true, and the beautiful.

Above you have only a postage stamp-size simulacrum of Montgomery's spacious illuminations on why and how greatly we need to bestir ourselves on behalf of the quality whose supply, through human innate perversity but also through our present brute ignorance about its nature and importance, grows sadly shorter at just the time it's the more wanted.

But well-placed enthusiasm has not blinded your reviewer to shortcomings; in this era of concern for graphic effects to enhance readability, Marion Montgomery will do well to shorten his paragraphs and perhaps provide appropriate intrachapter captions before sending his next brace of books to the printer. A sending which, rumor whispers, may be very soon. ◈

Intellectual Pollution: Some Literary Critics Portrayed

by Fred Chappell

1.
Blandword died; and now his ghost
Drifts gray through lobby, office, hall.
Some mourn diminished presence; most
Can see no difference at all.

2.
Dr. Chainsaw has one rule
That makes all others void and null,
Embodying this sentiment:
Guilty till proven innocent.

3.
Professor Pliant flits from school to school.
An Archetypal Marxian Feminist,
A faithful Structural Deconstructionist,
His beige enthusiasms never cool.

And never warm. As any führer's disciple
He finds himself unable to confute or
Challenge even an obvious intellectual cripple.
He is the very model of a hermeneuter.

4.
Blossom's footnotes never shirk
The task of touting his own work.

5.
Peter Puffer piped a pack of poets into
Undeservedly prominent public view;
Then, just to show the power of his pen,
Provokingly piped them pouting out again.

6.
Strychnine writes impartially
Of novels, plays, and poetry;
His judgments upon authors are
By his own lights impeccably fair
Because when all is said and done
By God he hates them every one.

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The Final Solution of the Philological Problem

by E. Christian Kopff

"With him the love of country means
Blowing it all to smithereens
And having it all made over new."
—Robert Frost

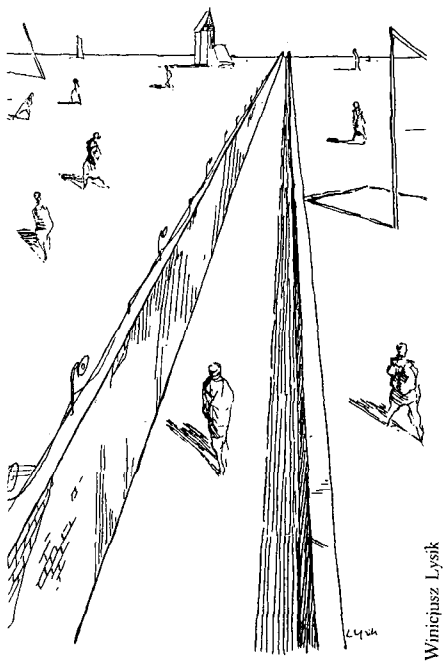
Wartime Journalism: 1939-1943
by Paul de Man
Edited by Werner Hamacher, Neil Hertz, and Thomas Keenan
Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press; 399 pp., $35.00 (hardcover), $15.95 (paper)

Responses on Paul de Man's Wartime Journalism
Edited by Werner Hamacher, Neil Hertz, and Thomas Keenan
Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press; 477 pp., $40.00 (hardcover), $19.95 (paper)

◆

Paul de Man's life was "the classic immigrant story" (according to James Atlas). He arrived in New York in 1948 from his native Belgium and worked as a clerk at the Doubleday bookstore in Grand Central Station. He met Mary McCarthy, who helped him to a job teaching French at Bard College. He fell in love with one of his students and they got married. By 1955 he was a member of the prestigious Society of Fellows of Harvard University. He ended his career as Sterling Professor of Humanities at Yale. At the time of his death in 1983 he was considered one of the most influential of the Yale "Hermeneutical Mafia," which had made "Deconstruction" and "Literary Theory" terms to conjure with.

In 1987 a young Belgian named Ortwin de Graef uncovered in Belgian newspapers De Man's wartime journalism, written under the Nazi occupation. Jacques Derrida brought the news to the United States. The University of Nebraska Press agreed to publish the many articles in French and Flemish (the latter with English translations) that De Man had published from 1939 to 1943, and the editors asked a number of literary critics and scholars to comment on the publications.



Wincjusz Lysik

Paul Adolph Michel de Man was born in 1919 in Antwerp, the son of Robert de Man, the prosperous head of l'Establissement de Man, which manufactured medical instruments and X-ray equipment. Young Paul de Man was a student of chemistry at the University of Brussels. His uncle, Hendrik de Man, was the head of the Belgian Workers Party and an important socialist. When Germany conquered Belgium in 1940, he dissolved the party and joined the collaborationist government. "For the working classes and for socialism, this collapse of a decrepit world, far from being a disaster, is a deliverance," he proclaimed. By 1941 he had changed his mind, left the government, and fled to Switzerland. After the war he was convicted of collaboration and died in exile.

His nephew, Paul, wrote many articles for *Le Soir*, Belgium's most popular newspaper, which was controlled by the Nazis after their victory. He wrote in French and Flemish for other papers and journals. Most of his articles were on the arts, especially contemporary literature. The young Paul was a Flemish nationalist who argued that Germany's victory was essential to freeing the German element in Belgian society from French influence. He reviewed seriously modernist and philo-Fascist writers. He wrote an article on "Jews in Contemporary Literature" (see box) for an anti-Jewish issue of *Le Soir*. When the Allies started to win, he reestablished contact with anti-Nazi Belgians. Although investigated by the victors in 1945, he was not convicted of war crimes, unlike others who had worked for *Le Soir*. He started a publishing house with his father's money and when it began to fail, he emigrated to the United States.

He left behind more than an aging and broken father. In 1939 he had met Anaide Baraghian, the Romanian wife of fellow student Gilbert Jaeger. Anaide and Paul fled together to the Pyrenees before the German invasion and later returned to Belgium to live together. They had three children from 1941 to 1946. By 1948 De Man had moved to New York, while Anaide went to South America with their three sons. In 1949 De Man procured a position as instructor of French at Bard College, where he soon "fell in love with" a young student. It is not clear from my research whether he was

E. Christian Kopff teaches Greek and Latin at the University of Colorado in Boulder.

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divorced from Anaide when he married Patricia Kelley, but this marriage was essential if he were to obtain permanent resident status in the United States. In order to change his status, however, De Man had to exit the United States and return. When he applied for a new Belgian passport, word of his past reached America and Harvard.

Years later his friends at Yale insisted that they had had no idea about his past. If they had said that they had heard rumors, but had dismissed them as idle gossip, we might believe them. Stories of De Man's past had reached the Society of Fellows at Harvard and he wrote a letter, dated January 26, 1955, to professor of comparative literature Renato Poggioli. Most of what can be checked in the letter is false. He calls Hendrik de Man his father and says that he contributed "some literary articles" to *Le Soir* in 1940 and 1941 (in fact, there were 170), which he stopped doing "when nazi thought-control did no longer allow freedom of expression." He implies that he was married to an American citizen when he entered the country in May 1948 and, oh yes, he had no idea how his family business was doing. "Since 1950 or 51 I have not heard from the firm. This made me assume that things were not going well but, since I had other things on my mind, I did not give it much thought." The firm went bankrupt in 1949. That Paul's real relationship to Hendrik was known at Yale is clear from an article Stanley Corngold, De Man's student, wrote about De Man in 1982. In it Corngold gives a very misleading description of Hendrik's career, with no hint of his collaborationist activities. (Corngold's 1988 piece in *Responses* is an unrelenting attack on De Man.) There need be little doubt that the ignorance of De Man's past at Yale was what De Man called in a *Le Soir* article of March 16, 1942, an *ignorance factice*, an artificial or made-up ignorance.

Is there a connection between De Man's wartime collaboration and his later literary theory? Jon Wiener, in a 1988 piece for the *Nation*, has a simple answer. He is sure that a number of prominent theorists are anti-Semites and Nazis. For Deconstructionist J. Hillis Miller, De Man's now famous discussion of "Jews in Contemporary Literature" is neither anti-Semitic nor Nazi, but an attack on "vulgar anti-Semitism." Christopher Norris and Geoffrey Hartman have explained De Man's later work as an implicit attack on his 40's attitudes. The question arises, in a world where all sorts of innocent people are smeared as Nazis and Fascists, why is one person for whom there is documentary evidence for his Nazism defended in places like the *New Republic*?

One place to start looking for an answer is with a quotation from "Criticism and Crisis," the first essay in *Blindness and Insight* (Oxford University Press, 1971; Second, Expanded Edition, University of Minnesota Press, 1983). In it De Man castigates an essay written in 1935 by the German philosopher Edmund Husserl and comments on "the numerous sections in which philosophy is said to be the historical privilege of European man." He ends by noting, "Husserl's claim to European supremacy hardly stands in need of criticism today. Since we are speaking of a man of superior good will, it suffices to point to the pathos of such a claim at a moment when Europe was about to destroy itself as center in the name of its unwarranted claim to be the center."

What is the meaning of the language used? Conventional Nazi rhetoric talks about the Master Race as being the highest stage in human evolution — vocabulary that pretends to superiority in time and quality, but that says nothing about "centrality."

In *Le Soir* for March 16, 1942, De Man discussed an exhibition on "Germany's Greatness" (the translation here is mine).

> There is another reason why Germany's historical destiny, past and future, cannot leave us indifferent. We depend on it directly. First of all because there exists between Germany and Belgium a profound interpretation [*sic*; relationship?] that reveals itself through the centuries by constant political and artistic contacts. Besides that, because no one can deny the fundamental significance of Germany for the life of the West taken as a whole. We must see in that stubborn refusal to let herself be conquered more than a simple proof of national faithfulness. The entire continuity of Western civilization depends on the unity of the people who are at its center. That is why the facts that determine the course of German history touch us twice: because we are Belgians, since they affect the values we share with it and because we are Europeans, since Europe's strength depends on it. The artificial ignorance of German affairs in which we have remained during the recent past has separated us from a living source of our civilization.

Now we know where the language of the "center" comes from in De Man's review of Husserl. It was De Man's memory of the way he and other young Quislings used to talk back in the 40's. Why did no one question this language when "Criticism and Crisis" was first published in 1967? For the same reason that Geoffrey Hartman quotes this passage as part of his defense of De Man in the *New Republic* in 1988. It sounded to him like the kind of thing that a good, non-Eurocentric leftist should say — though I know of no reason why leftists should feel that the defeat of Nazism and the introduction of constitutional government into more than half of Europe was a defeat, even a destruction of Europe. Why did no one at the University of Texas (where the talk was first given) ask De Man why he said "Europe" when he meant "Germany"? Why did no one ask De Man why he saw the defeat of Nazi Germany as the destruction of Europe "as center"? I know why a Nazi would say such a thing, but who else would? (I shall pass over the impossibility of destroying yourself as center by an unwarranted claim to be center. Logic is not one of Deconstruction's strong points.)

It is striking that the De Man of the 40's admires Germany for coming back from defeat. He had no such ambitions for himself. He wanted to be with the winners at all times and at all costs. When Germany was winning, she was the center. When Germany lost, it was time to emigrate to the

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United States. There were no regrets for Europe.

De Man's *Critical Writings, 1953-1978* was reprinted in 1988 by the University of Minnesota Press. What are called his books are reprints of earlier essays with some new material. He never edited a text or wrote a commentary on a work of literature. His essays typically take a small part of an author's work and discuss it from a narrow perspective. Nevertheless, the literary-critical establishment has drawn the wagon train into a circle around De Man's accomplishments.

The question of De Man's lack of substantive publication is serious. One of the most common myths about the academy is that "good teaching" is rejected in favor of scholarly publication. Whatever may be true in the physical sciences, for the humanities this is arrant nonsense. Two-thirds of tenured faculty in the humanities publish nothing but their dissertations, if they publish that. Some of what appears consists of literary criticism or theory, with no historical or textual base, often setting the words of the text completely at naught. (Ortwin de Graef has shown this about De Man's work on Rousseau.) Most faculty are tenured on the basis of a few unrefereed or virtually unrefereed articles and their reputations as Great Teachers. The more cynical look for administrative posts or become chairmen of their departments, where they get much better raises than serious publication brings and whence they can fight off the hiring or tenuring of serious scholars.

Few of De Man's articles appeared in prestigious refereed journals. Of the essays in *Blindness and Insight*, one appeared in *Modern Language Notes*. The rest appeared first in *Festschriften*, special issues of journals, unrefereed journals, or in the Acta of conferences. One piece of the newly reprinted *Critical Writings* appeared first in *Comparative Literature*; the rest in foreign reviews, literary journals, or the *New York Review of Books*. A good scholar will appear in such places, of course, but he will also appear in refereed journals and presses. None of De Man's articles concerned the kind of historical and textual questions for which adequate standards have been developed over the years. His style is a mush of obfuscating jargon, about which his disciples boasted. (Attempting to show the influence of Sartre on De Man, Stanley Corngold wrote in 1982, "Here is Sartre's deliberate antibourgeois refusal to write well . . . that has proved congenial to De Man.") If Yale was not only tenuring and promoting De Man, but giving him its most prestigious chair of the humanities, it was for reasons other than publication.

Was it because of crypto-Nazism in literary academia, as Jon Wiener hinted? On the surface the idea is not absurd. Liberalism, communism, and fascism are all revolutionary movements that developed out of opposition to traditional European values and norms. They are not the same, but they share many ideas and instincts. An intelligent Nazi would not easily give himself away in an American university, any more than smart Communists betrayed themselves in the State Department of the 40's. J. Hillis Miller claims that Deconstruction helps to undermine "totalizing and totalitarian thinking." Gerald Graff tells us that Marxist New Historicists and feminists have seized upon Deconstruction as an essential tool in their attack on America. Miller cites no evidence to support his claim, while Graff's statement is easy to confirm. The fact that Marxists use a method does not of itself prove that the method is totalitarian. If, however, we then discover that one of the founders of this method was in his youth a Nazi, can we honestly act surprised?

What about De Man's anti-Semitic article? This is what Jacques Derrida called the "open wound." J. Hillis Miller tells us that the article is a defense of Jews and literary modernism against "vulgar anti-Semitism." Then one reads the article. "Vulgar anti-Semites" think that Jews are intelligent and aggressive and run modern culture. De Man thinks, *au contraire*, that Jews are second-rate as thinkers and mediocre as writers. If they were all shipped off to Madagascar, Europe would lose some mediocre talents. In his later academic life, De Man's col-

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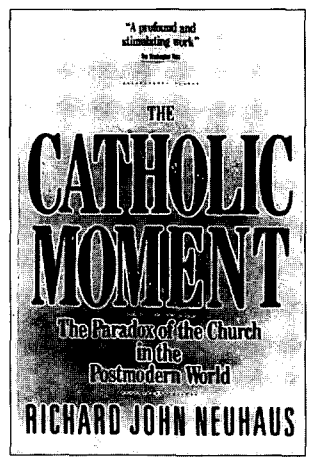

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leagues included Geoffrey Hartman, Harold Bloom, and Jacques Derrida. Did their thinking and writing give him cause to change his mind? We have many statements that he did not go around Yale making openly anti-Semitic remarks. In other words, he was not stupid, which no one accuses him of being. The issue is, did he ever change his mind from his clearly expressed opinion of 1941, that shipping, for example, Hartman, Bloom, and Derrida off to "a Jewish colony isolated from Europe would not involve, for the literary life of the West, deplorable consequences"?

It is clear from a reading of the essays on De Man that the only aspect of De Man's past that bothers most theorists is his contempt for Jews. There is not a single attack on De Man because he was a Quisling, because he betrayed his country for an ideology. The normal, healthy person loves his country as he loves his family, not because they fit into a theory, but because they are his. If your son fails an examination or your country loses a battle to Germany, you do not abandon him or repudiate it. That is what Stephen Decatur meant when he made his famous toast: Our country, right or wrong. Most Americans know this instinctively, just as they know what kind of man deserts his wife and children or flatters brutal dictators for self-advancement. We begin to understand De Man's obsession with Rousseau, to whom he attributes his own views. They were the same kind of person, although even Rousseau never managed to achieve De Man's triple of Quisling, bankrupt, and deserter of his family.

Totalitarianism has lost, when it has lost, because of the existence of the United States of America. The American way of life represented in the 40's, as it still does, a profound commitment to the traditions—political, ethical, and religious—that have developed out of ancient Greece, Rome, and Israel; traditions that helped form Europe. It stands as the great alternative to the deracinated ideologies that almost destroyed Europe during World War II. These European traditions survive in many ways, in memory and in practice, but one of the most important ways they survive is in books. The Muslims know this. They call Christians and Jews "Peoples of the Book." Within English literature, from the poet of *Beowulf* to Walker Percy, these traditions are presupposed and represented. They live there, among other places. If young people read these great works, these traditions will seize on their minds as they have on so many other generations.

The genius of Deconstruction is that it allows the teacher, the transmitter of society's values, to concentrate on what is *not* talked about. Is Pamela frigid? Is Jim in love with Huck Finn? Why are the works of the canon permeated with Platonism, or Christianity, or patriarchy? What is the feminist perspective on Shakespeare? (Read *The Taming of the Shrew*.) The teacher may spend class time, and the student may pass hours writing papers, exorcizing these demons. In one essay,

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"JEWS IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE," FROM *LE SOIR*, MARCH 4, 1941.

Popular anti-Semitism likes to consider the cultural phenomena of the postwar period (after the war of 1914-1918) as degenerate and decadent, because Judaized. Literature has not escaped this lapidary judgment. All one needs to do is to find some Jewish writers under Latinized pseudonyms to consider all contemporary literary production as polluted and baneful. This idea brings some rather dangerous consequences. First of all, it leads to the *a priori* condemnation of a complete literature which does not merit this fate. In addition, as soon as one wants to accord some merit to contemporary letters, it would be a very unflattering evaluation of Western writers to reduce them to being simple imitators of a Jewish culture which is foreign to them.

The Jews themselves have contributed to spreading this myth. They have often boasted of being the leaders of the literary movements that characterize our age. In reality, however, the mistake has a deeper cause. The widespread opinion that the modern novel and poetry are only a sort of monstrous excrescence of the World War is the origin of the thesis of a Jewish *coup d'etat*. Since the Jews really have played an important role in the artificial and disordered existence of Europe since 1920, a novel born in that atmosphere would deserve, up to a certain point, the adjective, Judaized.

The reality, however, is different. It seems that aesthetic evolution obeys very powerful laws which continue to act even when humanity is shaken by powerful events. The World War provoked a profound disruption in the political and economic world. The life of art, however, was much less shaken up, and the forms we know today are the logical and normal consequences of what took place before.

The situation is particularly clear in the case of the novel. Stendahl's definition, "the novel is a mirror that takes a walk along a great highway," contains in it the law that still today rules this literary genre. First of all one sees the obligation to respect scrupulously exterior reality. By digging a little deeper, however, novelists ended up exploiting psychological reality. Stendahl's mirror no longer remains motionless along the road. It is undertaking investigations into the most secret recesses of the characters' souls. This region has been proven so productive in surprises and riches that it is still the one and only field for a novelist to investigate.

Gide, Kafka, Hemingway, Lawrence—one could draw out the list indefinitely—all of them are only trying to penetrate, according to the methods that belong to their own personalities, into the secrets of the inner life. In this way, they show that they are not innovators who have broken with all the traditions of the past, but are simple continuers who are only deepening the realist aesthetic that is a century old.

A similar demonstration could be made in the area of poetry. The forms that seem to us the most revolutionary, such as Surrealism or Futurism, in reality have orthodox ancestries that cannot be detached from them.

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De Man showed that Derrida falsely attributed to Rousseau a simplistic view of progress that was clearly and explicitly rejected in Rousseau's text. It does not matter, though, De Man tells us. Derrida's attitude is still the right one. The critic's blindness, what we lesser breeds without the Law call his blunders, are essential to his genius. The point is not to enter into a sympathetic relationship with the author. That implies a false metaphysic of presence. The truest criticism is to interrupt the Great Conversation with our own concerns and to shout down, or deny tenure to, the reader, philologist, or historian who would let the authors speak for themselves. (The very idea is the sheerest logocentricity.)

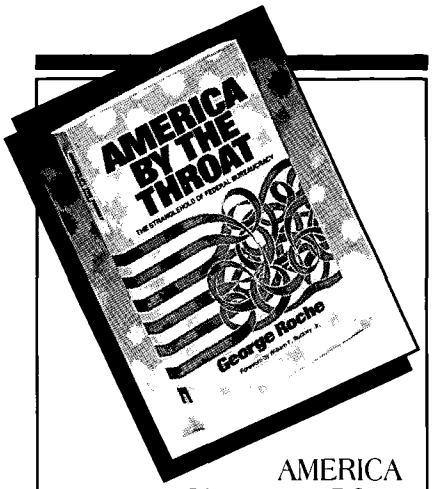
The dream of the literary theorist is the final solution to our country's history (which is only "a written text," according to De Man) and literature and culture and religion. It is the way for us to free the world from "totalizing thinking," from learning from literature how to make sense of our own lives and our culture, from the delusion that wise men have distilled their wisdom for us in the honey of words.

The irony of human life lies hidden in the mystery that in order to reach out to speak to or to understand someone else, we have to be firmly rooted in family, in nation, in religion, in culture. Without that there is no creativity and no comprehension, no art and no criticism. "You must not think that living according to your country's way of life is slavery," says Aristotle; "it is the way home." By betraying home and family Paul de Man cut himself off from ever understanding great literature. The truest critique of Paul de Man and the deracinated mediocrities for whom he was literary Gauleiter are the words John Steinbeck gave to the Chicano warrior Emiliano Zapata, when he finally understands the desert in which the modern ideologue blooms. "You have no wife, no woman. You have no farm, no land. You have no love."

Consequently, one sees that to consider contemporary literature as an isolated phenomenon, created by the peculiar mentality of the 1920's, is absurd. Similarly, Jews cannot claim to have been its creators, nor even to have exercised a preponderant influence on its development. If one examines matters with any care, that influence appears as extraordinarily unimportant, for one would have expected that, given the specific characteristics of the Jewish mind, it would have played a more brilliant role in that artistic production. Their cerebral character, their capacity to assimilate doctrines while maintaining a certain coldness in regard to them, seem very precious qualities for the work of lucid analysis that the novel demands. Despite this, however, Jewish writers have always remained second-rate and, to speak only of France, André Maurois, Francis de Croisset, Henri Duvernois, Henri Bernstein, Tristan Bernard, Julien Benda, etc. are not among the most important figures, nor among those who have especially directed in some way the literary genres.

Learning this fact is comforting for Western intellectuals. That they have been able to protect themselves from Jewish influence in an area so representative of culture as literature is a good sign of their vitality. It would not be right to express much hope for the future of our civilization if it had allowed itself to be invaded without resisting by a foreign force. By keeping its originality and character intact, despite the Semitic meddling into all aspects of Europe's life, it has shown that its deep nature was healthy. More, one sees therefore that a solution to the Jewish problem that aims at the creation of a Jewish colony isolated from Europe would not involve, for the literary life of the West, deplorable consequences. That literary life would lose, all in all, some personalities of mediocre value and would continue, as in the past, to develop according to its great evolutionary laws.

—Paul de Man. Translated by E. Christian Kopff



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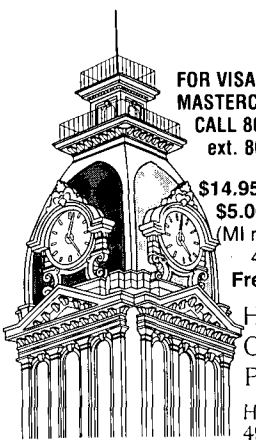

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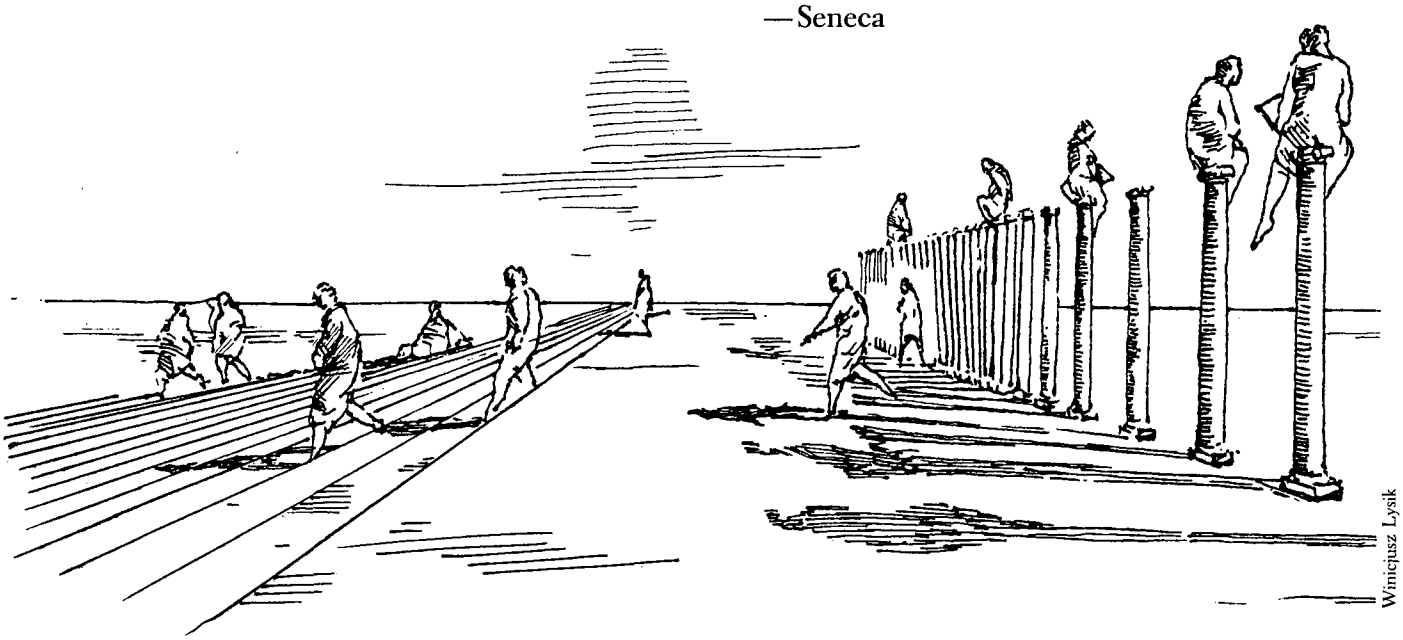
The Israeli Prescription

by Leon T. Hadar

"Moderation lasts."
—Seneca



Wincjusz Lysik

Intifada
by Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari
New York:
Simon and Schuster;
337 pp., $22.45

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The American public has fallen victim in recent years to a propaganda assault, launched and coordinated by the Israeli Likud party and their American partners, whose theme is clear and simple: the long-term security of the Jewish state lies in its ability to maintain control over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with its mainly Arab population. A corollary of this axiom is that Washington should help Israel cling to those territories it occupied in the 1967 war.

Now two highly-respected Israeli journalists, Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, have for all practical purposes demolished these frequently contended arguments. Their study, entitled *Intifada*, focuses on the over two-year-old Palestinian uprising, and it is destined to become the Israeli version of David Halberstam's *The Best and the Brightest*—or, even worse, Jerusalem's Pentagon Papers.

Intifada, which has been published both in English and Hebrew, charges that the Israeli political elite, through a mixture of ideological blindness, political stupidity, and military incompetence, is directly responsible for the policies that ignited and perpetuated the violence in the occupied territories. Moreover, without beating around the bush, the authors suggest that Israel's national interest dictates that its leadership find a way politically to decouple their state from the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza, and that the American administration should help Israel move in that direction.

Much to the chagrin of American Likud partisans who try to portray anyone who challenges the Greater Israel dogma as a left-leaning "McGovernite," a naive do-gooder, or an "anti-Israeli," both Schiff and Ya'ari are closely linked to Israel's national security establishment. Ya'ari, the military correspondent of Israel's state-run television and a military intelligence officer (res.), and Schiff, a Lippmannesque columnist for the daily *Ha'aretz* (the country's *New York Times*), are supporters of a strong Israeli national defense and have very few illusions about the peace-loving tendencies and pacifist attitudes of the Arab side. However, like the American Old Right isolationists and the more traditional realist foreign policy thinkers such as George Kennan, the two have reached the conclusion that national interest and healthy patriotism are not necessarily equated with the building of empires, and that military and diplomatic overreaching involve major costs to the hegemonic power.

Indeed, in a journalistic odyssey that started with their much-publicized critical account of the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Ya'ari and Schiff have pointed to Israel's need to redefine its national interest in a way that would fit with its limited resources and political tradition. More specifically, they argue that neither in 1982 in Lebanon nor today in the West Bank can four million Israelis impose their political will on large alien Arab populations without giving rise to the most radical forces on the other side, and without paying a political, economic, and military price.

In Lebanon the Israeli invasion

Leon T. Hadar, a Washington-based journalist and lecturer, is teaching political science at American University and is writing a book on American policy in the Middle East for the Cato Institute.

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strengthened the hands of the radical Shi'ite groups, and in the West Bank the violent suppression of the uprising increased the power of religious fundamentalist Moslem groups that oppose any solution with the Jewish state. In addition, the Israeli occupation is eroding Israel's democratic system as the Palestinians are gradually turned into second-class citizens, thereby creating major dislocations in an economy that is dependent today on cheap labor from the territories; destroying the national consensus, with the society divided politically more than ever, much in the manner that America was divided during the Vietnam War; and even drastically weakening the military.

Indeed, one of the book's most poignant chapters deals with the reaction of the top military staff to the *intifada*. As the authors describe it, many of the high-ranking officers feel they have become scapegoats for a bankrupted political leadership that has failed to reach a solution to the uprising. Young Israeli soldiers with no prior training find themselves performing the duties of a police security force. This leads to major psychological problems among the eighteen- to twenty-one-year-old recruits, resulting in both brutal behavior against the Palestinians and in mental problems that lead, in some cases, to suicide.

"The leadership abandoned us here to perform their dirty work here" is the line of thinking that Ya'ari and Schiff detect among the officers who operate in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The Israeli chief of staff and his aides argue that the occupation diverts the military from training and preparing for more serious challenges, such as a possible Arab attack upon Israel. Hence, it is not surprising that these very people are supportive of a negotiated solution to the *intifada* problem, including the possibility of an agreement with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Ironically, the civilian leadership of the Likud and their supporters in the United States, who are refusing to give over any part of Israel to Arab control, even in return for a genuine peace agreement, accuse the military of appeasement and "wimpiness" in the face of Palestinian violence. The authors meticulously detail how the Likud-led government under Prime Minister Yitzchak Shamir sabotaged efforts to reach an agreement with King Hussein of Jordan and torpedoed policies aimed at encouraging the rise of a moderate Palestinian leadership in the West Bank. The only choice open to Israel today, contend Ya'ari and Schiff, is to negotiate with the PLO and with its supporters in the territories. A refusal to do that, they warn, will cause Israel in a few years to face a more radical Palestinian leadership that would make Arafat and his colleagues look in retrospect like a unit of the Salvation Army.

The authors' study of the 1982 War of Lebanon revealed that the American administration gave the then defense minister Ariel Sharon a "green light" to launch that disastrous military campaign, and that as a result America must share some responsibility for the bloodshed that ensued in that country. In their current study, they point to the kid-glove treatment with which the Reagan administration handled the Likud's refusal to reach any diplomatic solution to the Palestinian problem and to end the Israeli occupation. By helping to perpetuate the *status quo* in the territories, and by rejecting the use of its $3 billion in aid to Israel as a means of pressuring the Israeli leadership to adopt a more conciliatory approach, Washington is also partly responsible for the violent reaction that ensued in Palestine.

The end of the Cold War, together with the *intifada*, are producing some transformations in Washington's thinking, which have led to the possibility that the military and economic aid package to Jerusalem will be gradually reduced, or at least tied to changes in Israeli policy. That, together with a shift in Israeli public opinion, might conceivably help the government to move toward negotiations regarding the future of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip under Palestinian leadership, a solution the authors recommend in the last chapter of their book, and perhaps even lead toward needed reforms in Israel's bankrupt socialist economy.

Only the adoption of such policies, they insist, will help Israel to end the *intifada*, to secure its long-term survival in the Middle East, to create a hospitable environment for absorbing the hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jews who are expected to arrive in Israel in the coming years, and to maintain its friendship with the United States.

BRIEF MENTIONS

THE WONDER OF SEEING DOUBLE: POEMS by Robert B. Shaw Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press; 69 pp., $17.50 (hardcover) $7.95 (paper)

Robert B. Shaw is one of that small group of American poets who has been proving to the world that readable English verse can still be written and published in the United States. The title of his volume is apt, since we sense in Shaw's poetry a kind of wonder at the everyday facts of existence coupled with a continual use of visual and optic metaphors. Browsing through a "Family Album," he advises: "Snap the book shut. Our seeing / will never match the flash / that riveted these frail, / fluttering plumes of beings", before "Turning In," he sees himself "flash by in mirrors and more / obscurely in the black unflattering panes"; and in "The Crossing of a Stream," he wishes "some memorizing eye / or touch quick at a shutter / could have composed us there."

Despite the sobriety and restraint of his manner, Shaw displays a remarkable range both in his subjects and in his approach to them, but it is in the attempt to extract meaning from the matter-of-fact details of ordinary life that he excels: a father lets his son pretend to shave and "Admiring how intently / he pares his sud away, / I view my flesh more gently"; and a mother's vain effort to keep the silver polished reminds him that "the bright idea I had of writing this / itself turns darker at the thought of time." Shaw's volume is a rare example of a poetry that rises to the tedious challenges of contemporary existence.

—Thomas Fleming

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La Trahison des Clercs

by J.O. Tate

Tenured Radicals: How Politics Has Corrupted Our Higher Education
by Roger Kimball
New York: Harper & Row;
204 pp., $18.95

◆

The state of higher education in our country is best passed over in silence, in order to avoid both useless exasperation and any provocation of "reform." The mess we are in is the result of a parade of fraudulent reforms and movements, of a national, political, and social corruption so pervasive that I see no basis for hope of the restitution of norms in the education industry. The corruption is systemic and has long since metastasized to a point past redemption. Harboring no dreams of an armed uprising by the "people"—only the homeless and the dead have evaded the totalitarian mindlessness of "education"—I only suppose that there might be some groups of private individuals who may revive ancient ideals of learning by banding together in secret.

Roger Kimball has not chosen silence as a way of dealing with outrage. And since he has taken one of the most disagreeable of topics for his exposition, the sheer readability of *Tenured Radicals* is greatly to his credit. Who would have expected that a book on the tendentious longueurs of pompous ideologues would be so funny? But so it is.

Mr. Kimball's method for dealing with a host of inversions, gnosticisms, non sequiturs, mendacities, opacities, and howlers is a sly if simple form of judo: he quotes them. Reading the book will show just how effectively Kimball's reproductions of abuse and exposures of betrayal work together to support his uniting theme. His quotation of Margaret Ferguson of Columbia University is a representative example:

> . . . [Professor Ferguson] pointed out that success in the university, especially for women and minorities, comes at a tremendous psychic cost. She confided that she herself had had to internalize a code of decorum and manners to succeed in the academy; almost sadly, she assured the audience that she was not going to stand and swear at us . . . much as she might want to at the moment; part of the price of being there on the podium was being trained not to do such things. And in case we didn't get it the first time around, she reminded us that she regarded the real problems in the academy as political problems: questions about the canon or pedagogy or education in general were merely fronts for political issues.

Roger Kimball does a similar number on Professor E. Ann Kaplan of SUNY/Stony Brook, whose probing and recondite analyses of rock videos he cites with force and point:

> Who would have thought it possible that a woman entrusted with teaching college English and directing a humanities center at a major university would make her scholarly reputation writing about "Smokin' in the Boys' Room," the rock videos of Madonna, and "Gender Address and the Gaze in MTV"?

Roger Kimball's dissections of absurdity remind me of some of the performances of Richard Mitchell, the "Underground Grammarian," and there's a sense in which his study is related to William F. Buckley, Jr.'s *God and Man at Yale* of some forty years ago. Kimball finds the academy neither ivory nor towering, but a sanctuary for those whose professing dishonors and degrades the Western culture that their institutions were founded to uphold.

> The truth is that when the children of the sixties received their professorships and deanships they did not abandon the dream of radical cultural transformation; they set out to implement it. Now, instead of disrupting classes, they are teaching them; instead of attempting to destroy our educational institutions physically, they are subverting them from within. Thus it is that what were once the political and educational ambitions of educational renegades appear as ideals on the agenda of the powers that be. Efforts to dismantle the traditional curriculum and institutionalize radical feminism . . . now typically issue from the dean's office or Faculty Senate, not from students marching in the streets.

Kimball is quite right to insist that the present state of confusion is often to be attributed to academic administrators, and not only to faculty members. But I question whether he should assume with such facility that there was an identifiable time when "the canon" and the heritage of Western culture were successfully transmitted by our nation's colleges and universities to eager eyes and ears. The great tradition of beer blasts, panty raids, and football games was not exactly one of Oxonian elevation, to my mind. Nor should Kimball assume either that there's any monolithic "tradition" to be identified, but rather many countervailing strands of passionate controversy instead.

Even so, Roger Kimball's *Tenured Radicals* is an energetic and entertaining essay. Kimball is essentially right about the decay of academic discourse, and he is quite correct in identifying our nation's elite schools as sources of contempt for this country and hatred

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for the great cultural achievements of the past. The legacy we identify with Dead White European Males is not "professed" but profaned by academics obsessed with racial quotas, questions of "gender," the control of thought, and the suppression of free speech. Does anyone suppose that the rapidly approaching anniversary of Columbus's first voyage will be celebrated as a heroic achievement and as a positive good, or that the consequent introduction of Christianity will be presented as a civilizing transformation for the better? Stand by for many learned analyses of "the imperial myth of cannibalism."

Roger Kimball's *Tenured Radicals* accurately assesses the present tone of academic life at some of our elite institutions. What's more, Kimball comprehends the implications of left-wing politics and the deep need for a rejection of the past by the professors of it. To the national debate on the curriculum and the canon, he has made an important contribution.

J.O. Tate is a professor of English at Dowling College on Long Island.

Happy at Home

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

The Quest for Community: A Study in the Ethics of Order and Freedom
by Robert Nisbet
San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies Press; 272 pp., $10.95

◆

"No changes have been made in the text of the book for this printing," Robert Nisbet wrote in his preface to the 1970 edition of *The Quest for Community*. Nor have changes been made in the new ICS Press edition, though it does carry a 13-page foreward by William A. Schambra that attempts to locate the central argument of *Quest* in the contexts of the intellectual climate of 1953, when the book was first published, and that of 1990. Almost forty years after the initial appearance of what ICS fairly calls a classic work, there remains not much to be said—from a mere reviewer's point of view—about the intellectual and historical merits of its thesis, or about the general accuracy of its description of social, political, and intellectual developments in Western history over the past two millennia.

"The history of a society," Robert Nisbet writes, "can be considered in many aspects. It can be seen in terms of the rise of democracy, the fall of aristocracy, the advance of technology, the recession of religion. It can be conceived, as Tocqueville conceived it, as the work of equality; as Acton considered it, as the work of freedom; or, in Bertrand Russell's terms, as the story of power." In the case of *The Quest for Community*, Nisbet's perspective is closest to Lord Russell's:

> I believe that the greatest single influence upon social organization in the modern West has been the developing concentration of function and power of the sovereign political States. To regard the State as simply a legal relationship, as a mere superstructure of power, is profoundly delusive. The real significance of the modern State is inseparable from its successive penetrations of man's economic, religious, kinship, and local allegiances, and its revolutionary dislocations of established centers of function and authority. These, I believe, are the penetrations and dislocations that form the most illuminating perspective for the twentieth-century's obsessive quest for moral certainty and social community and that make so difficult present-day problems of freedom and democracy. These are the essential subject matter of this book.

That was not a reading of history that the liberal and democratic powers, in the aftermath of great wars fought on behalf of "the more abundant life" and against "the totalitarian threat," wanted to contemplate in the early 50's, and nobody who has read—or will read—Professor Nisbet's fine book can ever wonder at that fact. The largest and most immediate question raised by the appearance of the 1990 printing of *The Quest for Community* is, therefore, to what extent does it provide a reading of history that the United States of America—self-chastised, humiliated, and dilapidated in the ensuing four decades—is willing to contemplate today? It is a question that William Schambra ecstatically embraces, rushing in where angels fear to tread and politicians only speak.

If Mr. Schambra had chosen to write about the events in Eastern Europe during the past 18 months—about the aggressive puncturing of windbag "ideologies," about the renewed empowerment of the Roman Catholic Church and the labor unions, about the liberation of ethnic sensibilities, and so forth—I would have been willing to agree with him that, since 1953, there has been some evidence that Western society has grown aware of the wrongness of the notion of the omnipotent and omnipresent state and that, yes, at present a kind of historical momentum has arisen against it. Instead, what I read is this:

> President Reagan's political career, for instance, was based on sentiments captured nicely in a speech from his 1976 campaign, in which he called for "an end to gigantism, for a return to the human scale—the scale that human beings can understand and cope with; the scale of the local fraternal lodge, the church organization, the block club, the farm bureau. It is activity on a small, human scale that creates the fabric of community." After becoming president, he continued to insist that "the renaissance of the American community, a rebirth of neighborhood—that is the heart and soul of rebuilding America."
>
> Similarly, George Bush repudiated the idea of national community in his vision of "a nation *of* communities, of thousands of ethnic, religious, social, business, labor union, neighborhood, regional and other organizations, all of them varied, voluntary and unique . . . a brilliant diversity spread like stars, like a thousand points of light in a broad and peaceful sky.

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At the time of this writing, the ethnic solidarity and loyalty of a minority—12 percent of the population, to be exact—is producing a national binge of emotional hysteria on behalf of a man whom one participant called "a dream for the human people," but who is in fact the terrorist deputy leader of a Communist political party bent on destroying a civilization dating from the 17th century and replacing it with a monolithic totalitarian government instituted upon strictly racial principles. Also at this time, a U.S. Cabinet official was booed and otherwise harassed in San Francisco by an organized group representing a highly oral minority whose differences from the majority have to do with the sensual pleasure they derive from releasing gerbils and other foreign bodies into their (excretive deleted). Days later, their behavior was recognized and rewarded by the national government in Washington, when joint congressional conferees on a civil rights bill decided that it should be illegal to permit businesses in all 50 states and the District of Columbia not to employ as food handlers people who engage in such practices.

It is true that, since the 1960's, all kinds of associational, interstitial, mediative, and even centrifugal groups have either arisen or declared themselves in the United States; it is also true that the American State, acting from Washington, has done its damnedest to co-opt them all to its leviathan purpose and that, for the most part, it has succeeded in doing so. Robert Nisbet is certainly correct in deploring the fatalism of Western intellectuals, who believe that whatever is truly "modern" is also inevitable. On the other hand, history *does* acquire a momentum of its own. That momentum has been slacked, at least for the short term, in Eastern Europe. Meanwhile, in the U.S., my tax bill is about to go up in order to keep bright those thousand points of light, all of them held in careful orbit so that, like Telestars, they may be in sweet and unbroken communication with the gigantic monitoring station on Capitol Hill.

Chilton Williamson, Jr. is the senior editor for books at Chronicles.

LIBERAL ARTS

NO JOINT CUSTODY?!

A divorcing Bellevue, Kentucky, couple has reached an agreement on custody and support payments for their six-year-old son but couldn't agree on who gets to keep their boat. Circuit Judge Muriel Robinson ruled in June that the husband, Michael Wayne Blair, can keep the boat, motor, and trailer, but that his wife, Donna Lynne Blair, can use it one weekend a month.

The attorneys agreed that Donna Blair should get the boat during the hours frequently used for child visitation in divorce cases: 6 p.m. Friday to 6 p.m. Sunday.

—*from* The Sunday Tennessean, *June 3, 1990*

Giving and Giving In

by Donald Devine

Patterns of Corporate Philanthropy: Ideas, Advocacy, and the Corporation
by James T. Bennett
Washington, D.C.: Capital Research Center; 322 pp., $50.00

◆

My first reaction to reading this book is, what has all the controversy been about? *Patterns* is an empirical study of corporate giving to public interest—as opposed to traditional health and welfare—charities. Mr. Bennett has shown great ingenuity in constructing a paradigm of such giving that he does not claim to be formally representative, but that is nevertheless very serviceable, and certainly the best study of the subject ever attempted.

The results of the survey show that American corporations—unsurprisingly—distribute their public interest philanthropic grants rather evenly between conservative, centrist, and liberal groups. But, although the number of grants are spread out, the larger ones tend to be directed toward the left end of the political spectrum; hence the controversy.

Yearly, liberal groups receive about $11.7 million from business, compared to $11.3 million for centrist groups and only $3.2 million for conservative ones. When center groups leaning left and right are analyzed, liberals are found to have almost twice the financial support from the corporate world as do conservatives. James Bennett finds it strange that businesses should offer greater assistance to groups that are critical of the capitalist marketplace than to those organizations that support it. Corporate charitable decision-makers, with one eye on their stockholders, have howled in response that they are not guilty of supporting their enemies. But Mr. Bennett's data are irrefutable.

On second thought, who should be surprised that businessmen who sell rope to their hangman might also be giving it to him? Lenin did not know much about economics, but no one has denied he was politically perceptive. For that matter, long before him Adam Smith observed that businessmen were not necessarily friends of the market. Indeed, the greatest social analyst of the early 20th century, Joseph Schumpeter, predicted that large corporation executives would become impatient with the discipline of the market and make cause with the government's bureaucrats to give the *coup de grace* to faltering capitalism under the welfare state.

Why might business support their enemies? First, as Smith noted, to do so might well be in their short-term interest. Poor market judgment can always be remedied by a government subsidy. (Lee Iacocca is called a great businessman for getting a government-supported loan to save a faltering Chrysler. Even yours truly could make a great comeback if someone gave him $3 billion.) Second, businessmen find that supporting left-leaning causes can help to establish them as part of the chic set, putting them in a better position perhaps to acquire an eighteen-year-old artist for a fifth wife. Third, leaning left gets good press from a sympathetic media. Finally, as Schumpeter noted, businessmen are trained temperamentally not to make waves; they will "not say boo to a goose," as he put it. When the left plays its political version of trick-or-treat, most corporations give the one to

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escape the other.

Still, given the incentives and the personalities involved, one ought not to be surprised at the level of support for the pro-market public interest groups. Indeed, if one removes the civil rights groups from the analysis, the left-leaning groups have an advantage of just $9.6 million to $8.1 million. Certain types of right-leaning groups are very successful: those which support removing regulatory burdens from business, and those which litigate against groups that harass corporations. So what's new; the business community seems to be supporting its short-term self-interest, as it always has.

To the cynic, the shock is that general interest, pro-market groups are supported at all. The fact of the matter is that markets are dangerous to the health of any particular firm. As F.A. Hayek has made so clear, the market helps the consumer and disciplines businesses. Schumpeter called the market the process of "creative destruction," meaning it is inefficient businessmen who are destroyed by the disciplinary forces of the market.

It is essential that friends of the market recognize that when businessmen support capitalism, they are performing a heroic and altruistic act. They are supporting a social good over what might not be in their short-term interest—which means, of course, that their behavior is going to be the exception rather than the rule. That business cannot save capitalism was Schumpeter's point, and he predicted that government would keep eating away at the market, increasingly fettering it and creating the demand for more regulation to correct new problems, until the system fell apart from its accumulated inefficiencies. Capitalism could only be saved if a political class loyal to it could be developed before the end.

In short, Schumpeter predicted Jimmy Carter and hoped for Ronald Reagan. Unfortunately, the political class created around Reagan has atrophied, and recreating it will be painfully slow. In that effort, which itself is problematic, one can be grateful for those businessmen who can look towards the common good served by the market and who are willing to support groups that promote it. Yet such men cannot do the job without the necessary political class to lead the fight. Building that political class is the challenge of the 21st century, one that will require the assistance of every friend of the free marketplace.

Donald Devine is president of a management consulting firm in Alexandria, Virginia.

Craft and the Craftsman

by R.S. Gwynn

Secret Destinations: Selected Poems 1977-1988
by Charles Causley
Boston: David R. Godine;
118 pp., $9.95 paper

◆

When Charles Causley's *Collected Poems* was published in 1975, reviewers in American magazines generally praised his work but somehow managed to relegate him to the limbo of minor poets. By focusing on his mastery of the ballad, they may have given the impression of a Johnny One-Note who, in his idiosyncratic disregard for the main currents of modernism, was engaged in an attempt to write as if Pound and Eliot had not existed. Here, in the opening stanzas of a poem in a characteristic mode, Causley chronicles the fortunes of errant youth:

> My friend Maloney, eighteen,
> Swears like a sentry,
> Got into trouble two years back
> With the local gentry.
>
> Parson and squire's sons
> Informed a copper.
> The magistrate took one look
> at Maloney.
> Fixed him proper.

This is squarely in the honorable line of descent that begins with the anonymous folk ballads of the late Middle Ages and counts among its later scions Davidson and Hardy. But what is one to make of verse like this, with its comic rhymes and erratic meters, when it issues from a poet of the present day? The tradition of English modernism, while catholic enough to include both the intellectualism and discursiveness of Eliot and Auden and the musical and rhetorical flourishes of Thomas and Barker, establishes few precedents for this sort of *faux-naif* plainsong. The equivalent American approach would be to frame the observations in the abrupt cadences and unadorned idiom of William Carlos Williams, as if to say that authenticity in dealing with the Common Man is arrived at only by avoiding the poetic forms he has chosen for himself. Our own American balladeers, caught between the rock of the literary magazines, which are not likely to give space to anything as reactionary-sounding as a ballad, and the hard place of no alternatives for publication in the popular press, have forsaken the slopes of Parnassus for the lounges of Nashville. Perhaps Causley is fortunate to receive a hearing at all.

Secret Destinations: Selected Poems 1977-1988 provides a generous sample of recent work from a poet, now in his 70's and writing beautifully, who clearly deserves our respect. At this late stage in his career, Causley is not likely to become American poetry's current pet Brit (the job has been vacant since the death of Larkin), but readers here should respond well to his best poems and forgive his infrequent lapses. He is a craftsman who employs a variety of formal strategies, from rhymed pentameters to free verse, in an attempt to match form with content; few American poets demonstrate such versatility. Generally, his poems contain strong narrative elements and avoid the subjective personalism that is the bane of too much contemporary poetry. It is possible that his idiom will slow the American reader ("Today / I see the naked-footed children trawl / The dam for yabbies. . . . "), but for the most part the surfaces of his poems are simple and unobstructed.

Causley has been called "England's Robert Frost," but trying to imagine an English Frost is about as impossible as summoning up an American Larkin. What he lacks, the element that ultimately raises Larkin to greatness, is a unifying vision: the terrors of existential aloneness that make Larkin's poems on bachelorhood (a subject largely unexplored in American poetry) so memorable. A poet who takes his religion seriously, Causley often explores Christian subjects and themes, but, to cite another well-known countryman, his work in this

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vain lacks the tension of poet-clergyman R.S. Thomas's poetry. Outside of his ballads, which are not much in evidence in the current collection, he lacks a single distinctive quality—of tone, of idiom, or of sound—that might set his poems apart from those of any number of skilled poets. The quality of the work is high, to be sure, but there is no "Mr. Bleaney" or "Church-Going" here crying out to be read again and again.

Causley was born in 1917, and his many poems about his youth and extended family rank among his finest. The England of his childhood was filled with the human wreckage of the Great War. "Dick Lander," a veteran who, according to one of the poet's playmates, is "shell-shopped," daily stands on a corner "playing a game of trains with match-boxes." The poem concludes with a childish prank:

> At firework time we throw a few
> at Dick.
>
> Shout, 'Here comes Kaiser Bill!'
> Dick stares us through
> As if we're glass. We yell,
> 'What did you do
> In the Great War?' And skid
> into the dark.
> 'Choo, choo,' says Dick. 'Choo,
> choo, choo, choo, choo,
> choo.'

One relative recalled is "Uncle Stan," who died in a military training camp in British Columbia. "He might have been a farmer; swallowed mud / At Vimy, Cambrai," muses the poet, "But a Canadian winter got him first." Most painful are memories of the poet's father, an invalid who died when his son was seven: "Once again my dead / Father stood there: army boots bright as glass, / Offering me a hand as colourless / As phosgene." In poems like these one hears second-generation echoes of Sassoon and Graves.

Since his retirement from teaching, Causley has traveled extensively. Several poems draw on Australian locales, "A detritus / Of boomerangs and bells and whips and saddles." The focus of his descriptions, however, is more often than not on people instead of landscape. "Grandmother" describes a Czech-German survivor of wartime dislocations who "guillotines salami with a hand / Veined like Silesia." "Bamboo Dance" describes a frenetic Filipino combination of music, movement, physical danger, and love:

> The dance is love, love is
> the dance
> Though bamboo shocks their
> dancing day.
> Ceases. Smiling, the dancers go,
> Hand locked in gentle hand,
> their way.

At "Gelibolu," the Turkish name for Gallipoli, he goes beneath surface, sensing the presence of history: "But this is savaged air. Is poisoned ground. / Unstilled, the dead, the living voices sound, / And now the night breaks open like a wound."

Aside from Hardy and Landor, it is hard to think of other poets in their 70's who have written this well. In the book's final poem, "Eden Rock," Causley imagines a reunion with his parents, "mother, twenty-three, in a sprigged dress," and "father, twenty-five, in the same suit / Of Genuine Irish Tweed." The call for the poet to be gathered to the bosom of his elders is phrased in restrained measures:

> The sky whitens as if lit by
> three suns.
> My mother shades her eyes and
> looks my way
> Over the drifted stream. My
> father spins
> A stone along the water.
> Leisurely,
>
> They beckon to me from the
> other bank.
> I hear them call, 'See where the
> stream-path is!
> Crossing is not as hard as you
> might think.'
>
> I had not thought that it would
> be like this.

There is a valedictory tone that runs through these haunting lines. In Charles Causley's case one can only hope that it is premature.

R.S. Gwynn is the editor of the Dictionary of Literary Biography volume, Contemporary American Poets. *He lives in Beaumont, Texas.*

Invocations of Malebranche

by David Klinghoffer

Lives of the Saints: A Novel
by David R. Slavitt
New York: Atheneum;
213 pp., $19.95

◆

"The great issues don't need to be vulgarized," observes the narrator of David Slavitt's 15th work of fiction. "They are vulgar, for they are exactly those things that everybody worries about." Of those great issues, perhaps the most inscrutable is the one most poignantly summarized in the title of Rabbi Harold Kushner's 1982 best-seller, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. Even before the long-suffering life of Job and longer still before Rabbi Kushner came along, the question was this: given the premise of an all-good and all-powerful Creator, how to explain the presence of rampant evil in the world? Crucial and ultimately irresolvable, the question has attracted responses ranging from the self-deluding to the completely mystifying—with Rabbi Kushner's little book, dealing in a tidy brand of self-help theology, tending more in the former direction. By now it's all been said before, and many times over. The wonder of Mr. Slavitt's novel is that it manages to address the problem without ever quite going stale on us, or being—on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis, anyway—less than refreshingly lively.

The narrator in *Lives of the Saints* is

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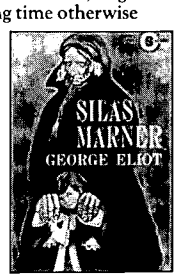

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an unnamed reporter for a Florida tabloid, the *Star*: a middle-aged man with intellectual tastes, once a teacher of remedial composition at a community college, who through failure and despair finds himself reduced to manufacturing grotesque confabulations for the enjoyment of his paper's credulous readers.

It is a type of work that directs the mind toward the contemplation of absurdity. Though Mr. Slavitt might have swiped these from real-life tabloids on sale at supermarkets across America—and with equally amusing results—his headlines for *Star* scoops are nonetheless witty inventions. "Dieter Goes Berserk, Tries to Eat Dwarf," is a typical example; while better yet is this classic pair: "Space Alien Bodies Found on Mt. Everest," to be followed in the next week's edition by "Little Green Corpses Mangled by Bigfoot." Inspired also by his study of the lives of Christian saints, Mr. Slavitt's narrator has been affected by the views of Nicolas de Malebranche, a French theologian and mathematician of the 18th century. According to Malebranche, evil can be accounted for if you merely assume that things just *happen*, without reason or motive except in the mind of God, which itself is unknowable. There's no point in trying to figure out why innocent people suffer and evil people prosper. In the sense of following necessarily from previous conditions, neither circumstance comes about in any intelligible way.

It is one of his book's faults that on the hundredth invocation of Malebranche, interesting though he may be, the reader is tempted to start skimming. The other fault of *Lives of the Saints* is that, in his enthusiasm for mapping out the implications of Malebranchianism, Mr. Slavitt skimps on storytelling. His narrator's assignment is to write a series of articles documenting the lives of a collection of people, all victims of a parking-lot shooting spree, by reference to the minor personal possessions they left behind—relics of these modern-day martyrs. So we proceed from one victim to another, including a failed poet, a travel agent, a little boy, and an exile from Khomeini's Iran, each leaving behind mourners with their own ways of dealing with grief—while Mr. Slavitt, in brief paragraphs, offers page upon page of reflections on their fate.

On the other hand, *Lives of the Saints* offers other pleasures. Mr. Slavitt has a gift for writing fresh, bouncy, even funny prose about such knotty philosophical problems as the relationship between cause and effect. "There are," he says in a typical passage,

> according to Malebranche, two ideas of how nature works. In one, nature is a dynamic storehouse of causes and forces with their implied effects and consequences. This is the widespread but false view. The other possible idea is simpler, clearer, less widespread but nonetheless true—that there is only the temporal relation of *before* and *after*. What we think of as causality has nothing to do with any earlier events but is solely the will of God.

It is in the discrete details of his story, however, that Mr. Slavitt's imagination is revealed to greatest advantage. His narrator talks about the "intimate authority" of personal relics, and Mr. Slavitt has invented a catalogue of them that could not offer more luminous testimony had they been plucked from real life. For example, at the home of Professor Stratton, the poet *manqué*, we find pencils

> lined up . . . on his desk pad. Not just a random handful, but an even dozen. And all of them sharpened to beautiful conical points.
>
> Which suggests that writing didn't come easily to him.
>
> So he hated his job . . . He wanted, as Stephanie [his wife] has told me, to put his teaching behind him and devote himself to art. But the desk suggests a pencil sharpener rather than any demoniac maker of sentences.

Mr. Slavitt's thumbnail descriptions of the characters he introduces are equally economic and telling. Of one fat young woman, he writes, "Cheryl was an intelligent and attractive girl before she undertook to eat herself into immenseness and thereby avoid those strenuous sexual sweepstakes of which she had been the reluctant observer." Of his narrator's overseer at the *Star*: "Lansberg is a quadrisexual, which is a person willing to do anything with anyone for a quarter." Though the novel breaks down when read in full, the pleasure of its bits and pieces is considerable.

David Klinghoffer is a film and TV critic for the Washington Times.

LIBERAL ARTS

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Following the lead of Marion Barry, whose arrest in January for cocaine possession occurred during the week he was hosting a national conference on drugs, the head of Houston's Drug Enforcement Administration office was arrested a second time for driving while intoxicated.

Marion Hambrick received his first DWI charge on August 9, 1989, when en route to a DEA news conference he crashed his car into the back of a city bus. His blood alcohol content was 0.14 percent, above the state standard for intoxication. A pre-trial motion, however, suppressed this information, and he was found not guilty. The acquittal eased a work predicament for Hambrick, who had nearly completed the 20 years of federal service necessary for retirement.

Hambrick's second arrest came on June 1, the day after he hit and seriously injured a sixty-six-year-old cyclist. This time Hambrick refused the Intoxilyzer test. As of this writing, he was awaiting arraignment and was free on a $500 bond.

Mark Evans, lead prosecuter in Hambrick's first trial, said, "He just didn't learn much of a lesson last time. It's my opinion he was guilty [in the first trial] based on the evidence, and he should've been found guilty."

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Letter From New York City

by Murray N. Rothbard

It Was a Long Hot Summer

◆

I returned to New York at the end of May for my summer stint to find that both bellwethers of New York life, the far-out left *Village Voice* and the chic liberal *New York*, were headlining (respectively) "Race Rage," and "The Race Mess." Yes, the fabled and much-dreaded Long Hot Summer was already well under way.

In fact, the "summer" had been raging ever since February, when a still-continuing boycott was launched against two Korean fruit stores by militants in a black neighborhood in Brooklyn. Details of the February incident are murky, especially since, as one of the baffled Brooklyn district attorneys put it, "the Korean and the black witnesses say the opposite things, and there is no way of deciding between them." All sides agree, however, that at the root of this and many other incidents is a "clash of cultures" between blacks and Koreans. The blacks claim that the Koreans "never smile," that they "dis" (show disrespect for) feisty black women, and that the Koreans don't understand the West Indian (the black woman in the February incident is a Haitian) proclivity for higgling and haggling over prices.

The first point to note is that the "never smile" charge can only be calculated to impress non-New Yorkers. Since when do *any* retail clerks in New York smile? In fact, the New York customer, in any retail dealings from "Bloomie's" on down to the supermarket, considers himself lucky if the clerk doesn't chew gum in his face. I remember the first time that I, a born and bred New Yorker, lived in California. It was a real shock when bank tellers said to me, "Hello, sir, how are you?" and "Have a nice day." My immediate reaction was, "What's she up to?" and "What scam is she pulling?" It took months outside of New York to decompress.

Furthermore, how come that Koreans are not systematically rude to *white* customers, be they male or female? And how come that blacks, even Haitians, don't expect to higgle over prices at any *other* stores? No, the real culture clash is very different from what has been portrayed in the left-liberal media. Over 200,000 Koreans have migrated to New York City in the last decade, and they have opened up 4,000 greengrocer stores throughout the city. Not only that: the stores invariably have far better vegetables and fruit (though of course at higher prices) than the quasi-garbage offered at the supermarkets, they are open 24 hours a day, and Korean families pitch in and work 18 or more hours a day. In short, the Koreans have not only revived the old, much-lamented Mom-and-Pop stores outcompeted by the supermarkets, but they have proved that hard work and thrift is the path to success and upward mobility. Typically, the Koreans spend next to nothing out of their modest revenues and, in a few years, save enough money to open up other stores. In the classic immigrant tradition, the Koreans have overcome the great barriers of language and lack of capital (even though they were middle-class and well-educated in their native land, the South Korean government, until recently, only allowed them to take a maximum of $5,000 per person out of the country).

Leftists see this phenomenon as another race "exploiting" the "black community." But why do blacks flock to buy the Korean wares? And why don't consumers in white neighborhoods feel they are being "exploited"? And why can't blacks open up stores and work hard? Liberals counter that white racist banks refuse to lend money to stores in neighborhoods with high crime rates and declining property values. How then do Koreans get the capital? From a network of Korean families and self-help organizations, which pool their savings to lend money for precisely such purposes. There is no reason why blacks couldn't form similar organizations.

Black activists also complain that Korean stores in black neighborhoods "don't give any money back to the community," which in plain English means hiring blacks and paying money to black churches and other "community organizations." The Koreans answer, and quite rightly, that their family labor force is extremely dedicated and low-cost, and that unlike large corporations, they can't afford such thinly veiled blackmail in the name of altruism. Besides, they resent such demands.

Which brings us to another "culture clash." The February incident in Brooklyn occurred when a Haitian woman, exasperated at standing in line, decided to walk out of the Korean fruit store. Suspicious that the woman had purloined some of their fruit, the Korean owner and his workers demanded to see her bag. She refused (even though every large store in New York displays a sign proclaiming the store owner's right to search a customer's bags). A scuffle then ensued, during which she claims that she was knocked to the floor (and suffered a slight cut finger) and the Koreans claim that they discovered in her bag three dollars worth of fruit.

In short, part of Korean "culture" is to resent theft of their property very deeply. Trained also to be suspicious of any police, the Korean storekeepers prefer defending their property themselves. These storekeepers, either out of bitter experience in New York or because they have imbibed white racist stereotypes (take your pick), are particularly suspicious of black customers, and are therefore possibly more ready to "dis" them than whites. And there we have it.

This black boycott has become an integral part of rising black militancy in Brooklyn. Mayor David Dinkins — the first black mayor in New York history — and his administration are caught between two opposing sets of expectations. His white liberal supporters

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elected him because he is soft, slow, and nonthreatening, and they believed that he could calm the black militants and bring New York racial peace. His black supporters, however, particularly in militant Brooklyn, voted for Dinkins in order to get a lot of goodies from the New York government. These goodies have not been forthcoming. Another problem is that Dinkins and his black advisers, coming from the relatively genteel old politics of Harlem, have never understood the militant and fiercely antiwhite mood of black Brooklyn. As a result, Dinkins has awakened to find that two sets of militants who give him fits are now in charge in Brooklyn. Sonny Carson, convicted kidnapper and proud hater of all whites, is the Grand Old Man of the Korean boycott, while The Terrible Trio, lawyers C. Vernon Mason and Alton Maddox, and the self-ordained "Reverend" Al Sharpton, responsible for the Tawana Brawley "rape" hoax in upstate New York, keep threatening racial conflict if, for example, any alleged white murderers of blacks are not duly convicted in court. Indeed, Stephen Murphy, the tough white defense lawyer for the eventually acquitted youth Keith Mondello, alleged Bensonhurst murderer, received many death threats from angry blacks. When Mayor Dinkins duly followed the white line by calling for peace and harmony and denouncing racial boycotts, the beefy Mason charged Dinkins with racial treachery and with "wearing too many yarmulkes" and appointing "too many Jews" in his administration.

Meanwhile, Brooklyn blacks have begun random assaults against Vietnamese (well, after all, don't they all look alike?), thereby bringing other Asian groups (most of whom hate each others' guts) into the fray in sheer self-defense.

Incensed at black racism, a black teacher at Brooklyn's Erasmus Hall High School, Fred McCray, led 30 black youths into the Korean Family Red Apple store—site of the February incident—to cross the angry, snarling picket line and patronize the store. McCray proclaimed that "unity means love." For his pains, McCray and his family received death threats, leading him to request a transfer from the school.

Revolutions tend to leave their pioneers behind, and so an interesting phenomenon of this accelerating race conflict is what has happened to a couple of venerable, streetwise, Irish Catholic left-populist writers prominent in the New York press: Jimmy Breslin and Pete Hamill. Even after decades of championing liberal causes and bleeding for the poor and the oppressed, Breslin and Hamill have never quite absorbed the idea that white males are per se guilty for all the evils of mankind. Pete Hamill never had quite his old enthusiasm for the black masses after the famous black gang-rape and assault of a white lady investment banker in Central Park last year. And Breslin, in early May of this year, reacted vehemently and in typically colorful language to an impertinent message sent on inter-office electronic mail by a fellow *Newsday* reporter, Korean-American Ji-Yeon Mary Yuh. Breslin had written a humorous column protesting that his wife, who is prominent in liberal Democratic circles and now high up in the Dinkins administration, was neglecting her wifely chores in pursuit of her political career. It was in the classic spirit of Henny Youngman's "Take my wife—please!" but Miss Yuh, who like all professional anti-sexists and anti-racists lacks appreciation for high wit, denounced Jimmy's column as viciously "sexist." Breslin, enraged, rushed into the press room at *Newsday* and denounced Miss Yuh as a "slant-eyed . . . yellow cur," further making what the *New York Times* cautiously referred to as "an obscene anatomical reference."

Oh the fuss and feathers! The venerable Breslin had not realized that the country had glided quickly into the tyranny of Left-Puritanism, and petitions by *Newsday* reporters and writers angrily demanded Breslin's head. The thought police were hard at work cracking down on "hate crime." Didn't they know about the rough-and-tumble of the pressroom, and about the great tradition of *The Front Page*, and didn't they realize that streetwise Jimmy could not be expected to react in the now-approved style of a "sensitive" young househusband? Breslin made the required apology to Miss Yuh, but there were some Inquisitors who felt that Jimmy's repentance lacked the requisite degree of abasement, and sure enough Jimmy had the gall to go on the notorious Howard Stern radio talk-show and to laugh off the entire incident. (Stern is the king of Obnoxious Radio in New York, in which the host functions as the lightning rod for suppressed racist-sexists in his listening area.) Well, that tore it, and *Newsday* promptly suspended Breslin without his munificent pay for two weeks. The Hate Police had gotten at least a pound of flesh, and so they pronounced themselves satisfied, albeit grumbling about the fact that a couple of years ago a *Newsday* editor not enjoying the prominence of a Breslin was overheard making racist remarks at a cocktail party and was promptly fired. Clearly that's what the Hate Squad *really* wanted, and the editor of the Portland *Oregonian* spoke for them all by canceling the offender's column permanently. Apparently, in our free and democratic America, a hundred flowers may bloom and a thousand arguments contend, but anyone who

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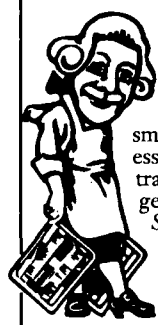

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commits a Hate Thought is in danger of getting the ax and being permanently barred from the "free marketplace of ideas" that our Establishment likes to crow about.

Murray N. Rothbard is a professor of economics at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He also lives in New York.

Letter From the Lower Right

by John Shelton Reed

An Academic Remnant

◆

As a rule I don't use this letter for academic shoptalk. Most of you aren't college professors, and few things are more tedious than another profession's gossip. Besides, there's no regional angle to this stuff, except that the trendy foolishness currently plaguing American campuses may afflict Southern schools (Duke University aside) marginally less than those elsewhere. Still, if you don't know about an organization called the National Association of Scholars, you should. Back in June I went to a meeting of that group in New York, and I'd like to tell you about it.

The NAS aspires to be an umbrella group for faculty members concerned or at least annoyed by what's going on around them. This gives it, to say the least, a broad agenda. At one time or another the organization and its quarterly, *Academic Questions*, have deplored entropy in the curriculum; the metastasis of race, ethnic, and gender studies; the denigration of excellence and Western civilization in the name of "diversity" and "multiculturalism"; the deformation of humanistic learning by tendentious or self-indulgent "theoretical" work; the proliferation of race- and sex-based hiring and admissions policies; and no doubt other enormities that I don't recall at the moment.

Of course, not every NAS member is exercised about all of these issues. Some of us are soft on multiculturalism, for instance. Others doubt the efficacy of imposing a core curriculum on unwilling students, or fear what a core curriculum designed by today's professors might look like. A few try to look on the bright side of literary theory and victim studies. Some (mostly tenured) aren't wild about the alternatives to affirmative action. Others just question whether it is politic for the NAS to bundle all of these issues: after all, the broader the agenda the narrower the constituency.

Still, the issues do tend to come as a package, and from pretty much the same promoters. And most of the NAS program ought to appeal not just to us reactionaries but to liberals of the old-fashioned sort who have had enough and aren't going to take it any more. That's certainly true when the organization steps forward to defend the traditional academic freedoms of speech and inquiry.

It's hard to talk about the threats to these freedoms without sounding hysterical, but they are threatened. That's not new, of course; they usually are. What's new is that the threat these days comes from what we might as well call the left, and that the usual defenders of academic freedom (notably the American Association of University Professors) are strangely supine in the face of what they would ordinarily call McCarthyism.

In my own discipline, for instance, the American Sociological Association was called upon a few years ago to censure James Coleman of the University of Chicago for producing a study of busing with conclusions that were not politically correct. At Harvard, when historian Stephan Thernstrom was denounced for "insensitivity" in the classroom, his accusers at first declined to specify the charges further; eventually they produced a list of offenses that included Thernstrom's observing that 19th-century Chinese immigrants practiced an "Oriental" religion, and remarking that family instability contributes to present-day black poverty.

Now, Coleman and Thernstrom are big boys, bull elephants of the academic jungle, and they weathered these episodes without permanent damage —although they've both become active members of the NAS. But what about students and junior faculty? When the Sensitivity Police come for men and women without named chairs and international reputations to protect them, a new double standard is applied without shame. Last year a student editor published some stupid slurs on Duke's black cafeteria workers; he was drummed out of office without one solitary bleat from the usual First Amendment fundamentalists. When an art student's offensive painting of Chicago's former mayor in ladies' underwear was torn down—well, actually I think it should have been torn down, but then I feel the same about Mr. Serrano's *Piss Christ*. (Even if Jesus Christ's reputation is on firmer ground than Harold Washington's, how about some concern for the feelings of Christians?) But where were the defenders of the supposed rights of that student "artist"? Hell, he wasn't even receiving NEA funds.

It's probably the 98-pound weaklings of academia who need the NAS most, and one of the great pleasures of the New York meeting was hearing from some of the Charles Atlases of our profession. One session dealt with the question "Can the Professoriate Reform Itself?" The consensus seems to be that, no, it can't, but everyone seemed pretty cheerful nevertheless. When you hear sense being spoken by people like Coleman and Thernstrom, by Gertrude Himmelfarb and Dean Donald Kagan of Yale—well, it's encouraging. You realize that you're not just right, you're in good company.

It's like the famous Asch experiments, which Intro. Psych. students of a generation ago may recall. Asch asked groups of people to say which of several lines was the longest. The actual subject of the experiment was the last to be asked, after several pseudo-subjects had confidently and consistently made the wrong choice, and often the poor schnook simply caved in and went along with the group. Some just felt it wasn't worth arguing about, but others were actually led to doubt the evidence of their own eyes. A few, unusually suggestible, even saw one of the shorter lines as longest, when the others said it was. Even subjects who made the right choice usually did it hesitantly and apologetically.

Apparently it takes a real hero, or a real jerk—anyway, someone unusually stubborn or arrogant or courageous —to insist that everyone else is simply wrong, even when they obviously are. That's the bad news. The good news,

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though, is that the presence of even one fellow dissident produced nearly unanimous nonconformity. Which is why the NAS meeting was such a heady experience: it was downright exhilarating to be in a room with a few hundred others who also know which line is longest.

It's hard to overstate the political lopsidedness of American college faculties these days. I think it was Thomas Sowell who said that the ideological spectrum usually ranges from left to far left. Those with views outside that range are likely to spend their working lives subjected to relentless academic groupthink, usually not so much conscious harassment as just the constant weight of assumption.

Incidentally, the bad guys in this business are not, for the most part, the former student radicals of the 1960's. Those of us who still bear grudges from those days may like to think they are, but we need to be reminded that the 60's are now as long past as the 30's were then. It's sobering to realize that our students see the days of the Free Speech Movement as either a mythical era when giants walked the earth or an irrelevant past that tiresome old fogeys get nostalgic about — either way, an epoch now lost in the mists of time. Sure, some of our old adversaries have now completed their Long March through the institutions and emerged as tenured wannabe thought-controllers. They're doing their best to insure that, a generation from now, scholars who don't share their opinions will be found only in disciplines like poultry science or in colleges named for living evangelists. They're a problem: in particular, they put others' commitment to a depoliticized academy to the test, because it's hard not to want to purge people who would gladly purge you. But, outside a few departments here and there, they're not the *immediate* problem.

That comes from a much more numerous and influential party of well-intentioned souls who practice what one speaker at the NAS meeting called, after Veblen, "conspicuous benevolence," supporting programs and policies that demonstrate good will and political correctness, almost without regard for any other consequences. To those of us who can see which line is longest, for example, it's perfectly obvious that quota systems undermine the self-confidence of their supposed beneficiaries and breed cynicism and resentment in others. That argument needs to be made (probably in an accent other than mine), but it will not move someone who is determined to show that he cares, that he is not "mean-spirited." One speaker at the meeting confessed that this kind of amorphous mush almost makes him nostalgic for the old-timey academic Marxists, most of whom at least had some sense of intellectual rigor and believed there are more important questions than whether people feel good about themselves.

Anyway, maybe — just maybe — the tide is turning. Let me tell a story.

Ten or twelve years ago, my department chairman got a questionnaire from something called the Gay and Lesbian Task Force of the American Sociological Association, asking 1) how many members of our department were openly gay or lesbian and active in gay and lesbian causes, 2) how many were gay or lesbian, but not politically active, and 3) how many he thought *might be* gay or lesbian. (My colleague, a brilliant statistician and demographer, is a Brahmin from Kerala who takes a rather detached view of American academic politics. He photocopied the questionnaire and sent it around, essentially asking us to volunteer.)

The NAS meeting reminded me of that episode. Deviants of the sort the NAS speaks for are also a vastly outnumbered and sometimes persecuted minority, although I wouldn't want to push the analogy too far. (Nobody's suggested quotas for us yet — and I hope nobody does, because I'd be tempted.) We, too, come in varying degrees of outspokenness. Not many are willing, at least not yet, to be active in an organization like the NAS. But there are more who make little secret of sharing our views. They may not feel as strongly about them, or they may feel they have better things to do than fight for lost causes (I often feel that way myself), but their mere existence makes an important contribution, as the Asch experiment suggests. It may be wishful thinking, but I believe there are more such witnesses than there were a decade ago. Ironically, the politicization of our campuses may have brought this about. People who constantly ask "Which side are you on?" are sometimes going to get an answer they don't want.

Perhaps even more encouraging are what I take to be signs that a growing number of our colleagues think straight in private. They really know which line is longest, in other words, but aren't yet ready to be disagreeable about it. Those of us who *are* ready, and willing, have all had colleagues sidle up to us, glance furtively about, and whisper that we're right about something. My favorite example is the friend who told me in 1984 that he was going to vote Republican — but asked me not to tell his wife. I've even had a few colleagues tell me that they read *Chronicles*. You can bet they get their subscriptions at home, not at the office, but it's a start.

When you're ready to come out of the closet, fellows, you can join the NAS for $30.00 a year ($15.00 for graduate students). The address is Suite 250 East, 20 Nassau Street, Princeton, N.J. 08542. Nonacademic sympathizers and curiosity-seekers can subscribe to *Academic Questions* for the same price.

John Shelton Reed's latest book, Whistling Dixie: Dispatches from the South, *out soon from the University of Missouri Press, has an introduction by Eugene D. Genovese, an old-timey Marxist.*

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STAGE

Jeanne Berg

Stratford 1990

by O.B. Hardison, Jr.

Tom-Toms Along the Avon

What Joseph's coat of many colors is to a London Fog raincoat Ontario's Stratford Shakespearean Festival is to all other summer drama festivals. It was founded in 1953 by Tom Patterson, a Stratford journalist. Patterson's motives were varied but one is obvious. If God had not intended a Canadian Shakespeare festival, why had He named Patterson's home town Stratford and run a river through it named Avon?

The first season consisted of *Richard III* and *All's Well That Ends Well*. It starred Irene Worth and Alec Guinness and was presented in a 1500-seat tent on a stage designed by Tyrone Guthrie. To the delighted surprise of everyone involved, attendance was regularly 98 percent of capacity, and the season was extended from five to six weeks. The Stratford company made Shakespeare the hottest ticket in Canada.

This year the Festival season extends from April 30 to November 11. Fifteen major productions will be offered, including four big Shakespeare plays —*Macbeth, Julius Caesar, The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *As You Like It*. The season's bill also includes Frank Loesser, Abe Burrows, and Jo Swerling's *Guys and Dolls*, Eugene O'Neill's *Ah, Wilderness!*, Racine's *Phaedre*, David Storey's *Home*, and three plays by contemporary Canadian playwrights.

The mechanics of this immense program are as impressive as the program itself. The festival has a payroll of 800. Its annual budget is $20 million, of which around $15 million comes from box office. That means roughly 515,000 tickets will be sold for 572 scheduled performances in three festival theaters. Canadians are no longer the only ones who have gotten the word. Around 40 percent of the audience will be from the States, most from the upper Midwest, but on any visit you will see license plates from New York, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts, and a scattering from states as distant as Virginia and Florida.

Canada's federal government contributes a niggling $1 million or so a year to the $20 million annual budget. Ontario's provincial government does only a little better. The grand total from all government sources is $2.2 million, or around 10 percent. There are no concealed subsidies for building maintenance, grounds upkeep (Canadians share the English love of elegant gardens and weedless lawns perfectly shaved), insurance, and the like.

Artistic Director David William complains that government grants for opera and symphony orchestras—both with less popular appeal than theater—are much higher. An official festival handout dramatizes the imbalance between subsidy and service: although William and company will receive only $2.2 million in subsidies in 1990, they will generate $70 million in business for Stratford motels, restaurants, and service businesses, and $15 million in "estimated taxes . . . for governments." Fair treatment aside, classic drama is labor intensive. If the festival is obligated by its charter to do Shakespeare, shouldn't the government provide a more realistic subsidy?

The festival is also under constant pressure from politicians and reviewers, not to mention playwrights, to produce Canadian plays and thus to celebrate what is known as "Canadian identity." People who use the term "Canadian identity" attribute potent and mysterious powers to it, but these powers do not extend to the box office. Therefore, argues William, if Canadian drama is important—and he agrees that it is—the festival deserves more support.

To an outsider, especially an American outsider, the case may not be quite so obvious. The great strength of the Stratford Festival is that it has had to sink or swim largely through its own efforts. That requirement has forced it to keep in touch with all of its supporters, especially its audiences. The public meets three-fourths of the cost of the Stratford Festival through the best of all possible activities—buying tickets and paying for them at a rate that is close to their real cost. By reducing the influence of the box office, larger subsidies might open a gap between the festival and its audience.

There is also the tail-wagging-the-dog problem. Those who give grants can withhold them, as Senator Helms reminded the National Endowment for the Arts last spring, during its reauthorization hearings. Canada is no less political than the United States. At the moment it is locked in a complicated debate about Quebec and Canada's (you guessed it) national identity. A grants agency might well maneuver the festival into pushing "Canadian identity" in defiance of the common sense of the box office and the artistic sense of the festival's artists.

All of the above is a reminder of an important fact about theater—not just Stratford but all theater. A play is supposed to be about itself, but by the time it is produced, any play worth its salt is also about things that are happening in the culture around it. Recall Olivier's movie of *Henry V*. It was about the British victory at Agincourt, but it was also about the sense of

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triumph after a terrible ordeal that the English felt in the last year of the war against Hitler. The film drew its energy at least as much from memories of Dunkirk and the Battle of Britain as from the Hundred Years War, and Olivier called attention to that fact by dedicating it to "The Commandoes and Airborne Troops of Great Britain." Again, Roman Polanski's *Macbeth* was produced after the murder of Polanski's wife, Sharon Tate, by the Charles Manson gang. Its brutality, its bloodiness, and its hallucinatory treatment of the witches combine elements in Shakespeare's play with memories of the murder.

The Stratford Festival has never treated Shakespeare as a historical relic. Sometimes its efforts to make him contemporary have been botched. Often they have been controversial, especially in Canada where Shakespeare-worship is widespread and begets a sect of fundamentalists outraged by the tiniest deviation from the sacred text. But for the most part they have been lively, and usually brim full of life. What else would draw tens of thousands of visitors annually from Detroit and Chicago and Toronto and Ottawa to the wilds of Ontario's farm belt?

Like all theaters, Stratford has had interesting and comparatively uninteresting years. I do not refer here to its productions, but to the direction of the festival as a whole. And I mean "interesting" in the sense of the old Chinese proverb, "May the gods save you from living in interesting times."

Nineteen-eighty was an interesting year. In that year the brilliant but difficult Robin Phillips resigned as artistic director, precipitating a series of crises replete with sensational charges and counter-charges that vastly titillated the Canadian press and almost destroyed the festival. When John Neville — best known in the United States as Baron Munchausen — became artistic director in 1986, he inherited a massive debt and a still-shaken company. When he stepped down in 1989, the festival had a surplus of over $4 million and all but the most severe bruises had been healed.

David William, Neville's successor, is an old-line Stratfordian with extensive international experience. His most notorious Stratford production was a *Troilus and Cressida* complete with

David Cooper

Brian Bedford as Macbeth.

motorcycles, leather jackets, and homosexual gang rape.

Asked about it, he laughs. Most Canadian reviewers hated it, but American reviewers tended to be enthusiastic. Will we see more productions like it while he is artistic director? His answer is that every play has its own unique demands. *Macbeth*, which he co-directed and which is the centerpiece of the 1990 season, is set in the 17th century and is straightforward, almost straight-laced in its staging. Why the contrast between the hyper-experimental *Troilus* and the traditional *Macbeth*?

According to William, the problem in *Troilus* was to make the ugly reality of the play immediate in spite of the complexity of Shakespeare's language. The problem in *Macbeth* is different. The plot is relatively simple but the chief character is a military hero, and in 1990 military heroism is out. Audiences need the psychological distance provided by the 17th-century setting. Even audiences skeptical about military heroism, William argues, will accept the idea that heroism was admirable during the late Renaissance. The same is true of the witches. They are credible in a Renaissance setting but would be absurd in the 20th century.

It's a logical argument, and William has chosen two of the festival's finest performers to give it force. Goldie Semple is a six-season Stratford veteran, and Brian Bedford is a ten-season veteran who may also be the most brilliant Shakespearean actor of his generation. With a director like William and leads like Semple and Bradford, *Macbeth* has to be a smash, right?

Wrong. It's easy to see where the production goes off track. In the first place, William's theory about heroism is a backhanded confession that he considers the play remote from modern concerns. That point of view might be fine in a history lecture, but it is a sure way to kill the play. In the second place, William's Macbeth is either evil from the start or totally converted to evil during his first encounter with the witches. Both interpretations make Lady Macbeth superfluous and gut the conflict between her will and Macbeth's conscience that is so powerful in the play Shakespeare wrote.

Deprived of her role as a demonically driven shaper of events, Goldie Semple is reduced to behaving like a housewife nagging her husband because he lets himself be walked on at the office. The mad scene is nicely done, but it is detached from everything before and after. This Lady Macbeth hasn't exhibited enough strength of character to go mad.

When discussing the role of Macbeth, Bedford remarks that it begins at a high emotional pitch and goes on from there. He is saying what the audience can see all too plainly: until late in the play, Macbeth does not change or develop. If there are conflicts between his role as military hero and his decision to commit treason or between his ambition and his conscience, they are suppressed. What *does* happen, and what Bedford projects so brilliantly that it almost redeems the production, is that Macbeth eventually loses all of his illusions, including his superstition. Bedford's "To-morrow, and to-morrow" perfectly catches this moment of absolute desolation. Yet even here, and in spite of Bedford, the moment has an academic quality. The soliloquy is more a recitation than a performance. Recitation is not Bedford's usual style, and since when has the Stratford Festival treated a Shakespearean play as a series of Famous Speeches?

You wonder a little about William as

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a director. Would he be more comfortable on a lecture platform than in the theater? William also directed this season's *Love for Love*, of which it can be said that the first act seems slow, the second slower, and the finale — a minuet that seems to be danced in molasses — slower than the first and second combined. By the time it is over, you appreciate as never before the meaning of Sartre's *No Exit*.

As You Like It is a considerable improvement. Lucy Peacock is a bouncy, enormously sympathetic Rosalind who projects resolution from her first moment on the stage. She is paired with a delightfully feminine Celia, and both have great fun pretending Rosalind is a man. William Dunlop plays a tartan-clad teddybear of a Touchstone with a droll sense of humor and a broad Scots accent. Why Scots? Well . . . why not? Everything works very well until Rosalind, disguised as Ganymede, begins instructing Orlando in the art of wooing. It is a long, demanding section, and Peacock is not quite up to it. Her double-takes and gestures aside to the audience become predictable. The result is by no means fatal, but it casts a shadow over an otherwise exemplary performance. David William plays a Jacques so morose you want to put him in *Macbeth*. Then there is his speech on the ages of man. As happens with Bedford's "To-morrow, and to-morrow," everything stops to allow William, clad in black and spotlighted on center stage, to orate.

Director Richard Monette locates the play in Quebec around 1758, the date of the battle of the Plains of Abraham, which ended Quebec's independence. Duke Senior is vaguely British and commands a squad of musket-toting heavies. The Forest of Arden is the Quebec outback complete with birch-bark canoes, guitar-strumming, step-dancing fur traders, and poker-faced Indians with arms that seem to have been permanently crossed at birth. It's autumn. Canadian geese honk overhead. Maple leaves are falling. (Wait a minute, is that *symbolism*?) It's all very jolly up to the wedding scene at the end. At that point the Indians start playing tom-tom music and the local chief invokes the blessings of Hymen, a tribute, one senses, to the educational work of Jesuit missionaries among native peoples. As the play ends, flags covered with *fleurs de lis* — an allusion to the Quebec provincial flag — are unfurled above the stage.

Monette has made *As You Like It* into a parable of either Canadian unity or Canadian separation, take your pick. Although his production was planned before the national paroxysm over Meech Lake and the status of Quebec, it invokes current tensions that neatly parallel tensions at the heart of Shakespeare's play. Even when it doesn't work, which is seldom, its failures are honorable failures of the sort that make the Stratford Festival consistently interesting.

Among many other riches of this first David William season, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is outstanding for the sort of ensemble acting possible in a company with the range of talent and the collective experience of the Stratford troupe. The costuming is Edwardian with a liberal dash of whimsy; the horns that Falstaff wears in the last scene, for example, are made out of bicycle handlebars. Roberta Maxwell and Pat Conolly almost steal the show as a down-to-earth Mistress Ford and a wryly inventive Mistress Page, and Vickie Papavs, a member of Stratford's Young Company, is memorable as the youthfully cheeky Anne Page. James Blendick's Falstaff is younger, more suave, and less blustery than your run-of-the-mill Falstaff. He is also plump but not obese, so you can understand

THE SHAW FESTIVAL AT NIAGARA

Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, is a jewel of a town less than ten miles from the honky-tonks and tourist traps of Niagara, New York. In addition to antiques and English marmalade, Niagara-on-the-Lake boasts a summer drama festival focused on George Bernard Shaw and the dramatists who wrote during his lifetime, 1856 to 1950.

Christopher Newton, the artistic director, has been on the job since 1979 and presides with genial assurance over a company of 65 actors. In 1990 his company is offering ten plays, including Emlyn Williams' *Night Must Fall*, a mystery-thriller; Cole Porter's musical *Nymph Errant*, and Noel Coward's *Present Laughter*. The three Shaw plays are *Misalliance*, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, and *Village Wooing*.

Misalliance was written in 1909 when Shaw was at his most bumptious and his least preachy. In 1909 old values were tumbling, new inventions were springing up like mushrooms, and the killing fields of the Western Front were unimaginably distant.

With the help of designer Leslie Frankish, Newton has staged the play in a surrealist dream of a hothouse. Vines dangle thickly everywhere, always getting in the way, having to be moved to make room for the people. The air is heavy with stage fog.

The set represents the cluttered intellectual hothouse of the late 19th century. Inside, Lord Summerhays tries to coach his wimpy son Bentley in courtship so he can marry bourgeois money. Mr. Tarleton, a bluff, self-made millionaire (he made it all on Tarleton's Undergarments) owns the hothouse. He is played exuberantly by Barry MacGregor opposite his placid wife (Jennifer Phipps) and his hot-blooded daughter Hypatia (Helen Taylor), the object of Bentley's would-be affection. Many changes are rung but nothing happens. That is the point. The characters are trapped.

Without warning an airplane — in 1909 the quintessential symbol of a revolutionary new century — crashes into the hothouse. The first arrival from the crash is Joey Percival, the passenger. The pilot is the beautiful, liberated, and unpronounceable Lina Szczepanowska (Sharry Flett). Soon all of the relationships begin to change. Summerhays and Tarleton proposition Lina. Hypatia leads Joey into the bushes. And in a surprise twist Bentley the wimp is invited by Lina to fly off in search of manhood.

Misalliance is first-rate Shaw done very well indeed, about equal measures of froth and substance.

In two other offerings the froth quotient is a lot higher. *When We Are Married* by J.B. Priestley is a glorified well-made comedy. Three couples discover after years of wedlock that they are not really married. Since they are pillars of the local Yorkshire society,

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for once how he might hope to be taken seriously as a wooer. Colm Feore is perfect as the fanatically jealous Ford, who, when disguised as Master Brook, has to pretend to be vastly amused by Falstaff's plan to seduce his wife.

David Storey's *Home* gives Stratford a chance to show its skill in contemporary drama. The play is about the world ending not with a bang but a long, darkly comical whimper. Its dialogue is a collage of single words left hanging ("Yes. . . ." "Quite. . . .") and half phrases. Success depends on near-perfect timing and disciplined control of tone of voice and gesture. It is impeccably performed by Nicholas Pennell, James Blendick, Pat Galloway, Barbara Bryne, and Alfred King. All are veteran Shakespeareans—Pennell, for example, is Banquo in *Macbeth*. The rigorous discipline of Shakespeare has clearly contributed to their success here.

If *Home* is minimalist, *Guys and Dolls* is maximalist. Everything in it is laid on as thick as mustard on a Nathan's hotdog, and it is the hit of the 1990 season. At the end of "Get Off, You're Rocking the Boat," the ovation of the opening-night audience all but tore the roof off the Festival Theatre. There's not a bad performance in the cast, but special credit goes to Jim White as Nicely-Nicely Johnson, Alan Jordan as Nathan Detroit, Karen Edissi as Miss Adelaide, and Tim Koetting as Big Jule.

In fact, the success of *Guys and Dolls* has made it controversial in the Canadian press. Here, the complaint goes, is a country intensely proud of its national identity, not to mention a country in the middle of a constitutional crisis, and what is the big hit of its premier theater festival? A brassy American musical based on stories by Daymon Runyon with a plot that hangs on the search by a two-bit gambler for a place to convene a floating crap game.

Is there a lesson here? No more, I expect, than in *As You Like It* with a French accent. *Guys and Dolls* will undoubtedly fill the Festival Theatre's 2300 seats night after night for the rest of the summer and will thus contribute materially to meeting Stratford's box-office target of $15 million, but that is not the main point. *Guys and Dolls* is obviously as much fun for Canadians as Americans. It says something about where the Stratford audience is these days in spite of Meech Lake and Canadian identity and the press and the politicians, and knowing its audience has always been the secret of Stratford's success.

That doesn't mean the Stratford audience is for Broadway musicals and against Shakespeare. It means the audience is for drama that touches its life and against drama that doesn't. The point is worth stressing because of the academic chill that affects some of the 1990 plays. The Stratford audience has consistently voted at the box office for drama rather than recitation and for experiment, including experiments like finding parallels between the Forest of Arden and the Quebec outback, rather than facsimile Shakespeare.

Of course, there are limits. If Indians are going to be allowed to camp out in the Forest of Arden they should contemplate the folly of palefaces in dignified silence and keep their tomtoms quiet during weddings. Tomtoms notwithstanding, it's good to report that Stratford is still the top summer drama festival in North America.

O.B. Hardison, Jr. is a professor of English at Georgetown University and a former director of the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington.

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they are mightily upset. If you can swallow that you can swallow everything else, including the inevitable last-minute revelation that the couples are married after all.

Trelawny of the 'Wells' by Arthur Wing Pinero is essentially a reminiscence of life in the theater in the 19th century. The first act takes place in a theatrical boarding house. It bubbles with oversized egos, small-scale attachments, improvisations, and a general sense of the fellowship of professionals who enjoy what they are doing. Rose Trelawny, admirably acted by Julie Stewart, is the "young leading lady" of the "Wells," for which read "Sadlers Wells." She has decided to leave the theater to marry Arthur Gower, grandson of the wealthy and puritanical Sir William, a role that William Hutt manages with almost manic inventiveness.

In the second act Rose is Sir William's houseguest. One rainy night she invites her old friends in from the wet. They promptly stage a small-scale orgy that is interrupted at its height by Sir William, who is not amused.

Exit Rose. Unfortunately, she has lost her zest for the roles she used to play. Pinero is using a theatrical metaphor here to suggest how the real world killed the well-made play. Rose's conversion is matched by the conversion of Tom Wrench, a fictionalized portrait of Tom Robertson, one of the first English playwrights to sense the new direction. Wrench creates a new-style play for Rose, a backer is found, and by the last scene the old actors have begun to adjust to the new situation.

This is froth as froth should be—sweet with just a touch of bitter, and insubstantial with just a touch of substance.

There is a truly extraordinary moment in *Trelawny*. Sir William visits Rose. When they fence verbally about pedigrees, Rose announces that she comes from a distinguished theatrical family and that her mother acted with Edmund Kean. Sir William is moved. He had seen Kean perform when he was young, and he begins to recite, first mechanically and then with growing intensity, "Now is the winter of our discontent. . . ."

It's a magical scene evoking the community of actors and audiences that is the essence of good theater, and the foundation on which institutions like the Shaw Festival and the Stratford Shakespearean Festival rest. There's something more. William Hutt has spent his life in the theater, much of it playing Shakespearean roles at Stratford. In 1990 he turned 70, just about the age of Sir William. When he recites Richard's speech he is honoring a tradition that unites Shakespeare and Edmund Kean and Sir William and Rose Trelawny of the "Wells" and Tom Robertson and William Hutt and all the other actors at Niagara and Stratford who are keeping faith with the tradition today and passing it on to the next generation. That's substance.

—*O.B. Hardison, Jr.*

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Jeanne Berg

Whose Women's Studies?

by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese

Women's studies has emerged and, in large measure, won its place in the academy as an unabashedly political undertaking. "Teaching," according to Florence Howe, a path breaker in women's studies, "is a political act." "Education," Deborah Rosenfelt adds, "is the kind of political act that controls destinies." In effect, they insist that education as we have known it until very recently has been a political undertaking designed to empower men and constrain women. For education in the masculine voice propounded values tailored to the measure of man, and thereby denied women's identities and foreclosed women's aspirations.

Informed by a crusading commitment to redress centuries of bigotry and bias, women's studies programs and curricula have proliferated throughout the country, fueled by the mission to change the hearts and minds of students—primarily those of women students, but, to the extent possible, also those of men. For supporters, women's studies embodies the responsibility to help young women seize their destinies unencumbered by crippling assumptions about their second-class status. For opponents, women's studies embodies a dangerous assault on centuries of learning, civilization, and perhaps even human nature. Thus formulated, the debate over women's studies is easy to confuse with the interlocking debate over feminism.

As an academic project, women's studies has contributed to the confusion. Born of a sense of oppression and exclusion, women's studies has, in general, retained a defensive sense of them against us. All too frequently, women's studies programs are much less well-funded and staffed than established departments. Often lacking independent faculty lines, much less adequate secretarial support, many programs have been forced to rely on volunteer labor. The sense of contributing to an important cause tends to promote élan and enthusiasm, followed by discouragement and burnout. Nothing has come easy. All of us who have participated in the attempts to launch programs remember the interminable meetings—described with disgust by a younger colleague of mine as "everybody bring a piece of cheese"; the exhausting struggles simply to get a course listed and to persuade departments to free a faculty member from normal departmental offerings to teach it; the ill-disguised contempt of colleagues for what they sneeringly dismissed as a passing ideological fad.

Small wonder in such a climate that so many of those associated with women's studies continue to view it as a feminist project. Small wonder that so many of those who oppose it continue to dismiss it as nothing more than an (inappropriate) exercise in feminist consciousness-raising. The pity remains that both sides are at once wrong and right. The participants in the debate are talking past each other.

Strong and dangerous pressures to ideological conformity notwithstanding, women's studies remains a vigorous and diverse undertaking. For every women's studies program that openly promotes a specific political agenda and emphasizes the transformation of consciousness over accomplishment, there is another that seeks to help young women to acquire an education and to prepare them to find a place in a world in which they are more likely than not to have to support themselves or to contribute to a family income. At LaGrange College in Georgia, middle-aged, middle-class women faculty members quietly work for a minimum attention to women's studies because they worry about the futures of daughters and students who have no higher ambitions than to attract a husband who (statistically) has a 50 percent likelihood of divorcing them twenty years later, just when their own children are ready for college.

Nationally, to be sure, the dominant tone of women's studies is established by more militant programs. We hear horror stories about introductory women's studies courses that deny male students freedom of expression and focus on a range of personal questions, from sexual preference to aging, and some of these stories may well reflect a substantial reality. The more ominous truth is that even at their most alarming these stories capture only a small part of that reality. Feminism in the broad sense does constitute the mainspring of women's studies, and, defensive postures notwithstanding, is today flourishing on college and university campuses, not to mention at conferences and professional meetings. The heated debate over the canon, now being waged in books, on campuses, and in the national press, directly testifies to the impact of feminist concerns, according to which women have been fundamentally alienated from a culture that casts them as objects and with which they cannot identify.

Feminism has, in this respect, emerged as the cutting edge of the broad postmodernist assault on received notions about the status of knowledge, certainty, rationality, subjectivity, standards of justice, and the self. Feminism in this sense is increasingly challenging received notions about the fundamental structures of human knowledge, and some influential feminists are rejecting all of our assumptions about knowledge on the grounds that they represent an oppressive and outmoded "binary thinking"—a way of thinking that rests on the delineation of difference as the foundation of all knowledge and therefore promotes hierarchy, notably the hierarchy that places men over women.

The most serious problems that plague women's studies result from a pernicious combination of defensiveness and arrogance. Make no mistake: most committed participants in women's studies persist in the (not entirely unjustified) conviction that they represent an embattled minority. But like the abolitionists of the 19th century, with whom they have much in common, they believe themselves to be the custodians of a higher truth against

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which no consideration for things-as-they-are-and-have-been should be allowed to prevail. The sense of embattlement doubtless accounts for much of their unwillingness seriously to address the responsibilities of running the world. Their mission is to transform it. Now. Like other zealots, they impatiently reject inherited niceties, including freedom of speech. The oppression of women has been such that the struggle against it justifies extreme methods. The weak, who are not bound by the obligations of the strong, are morally justified in giving no quarter.

Typically, proponents of women's studies resolutely insist on combating hierarchy in all its forms. The classroom becomes the laboratory for a new system of social relations. With the authority of received knowledge suspect, the authority of the professor (presumably justified by knowledge) becomes arbitrary. A wholesome classroom must become an open space in which students and professors alike share insights. In this atmosphere, the goal of teaching becomes to "empower" students to find and express their own voices, to make explicit their own silences. Unfortunately, this purported openness rarely allows equal time for the opposing views of women as well as men. With so much at stake, tolerance for opposition is reduced to a dangerous luxury. That all of this sounds a good deal like a general radical tendency in the academy only makes it the more dangerous. For notwithstanding the persisting obstacles to funding and credibility, it does converge with a powerful anti-authoritarian tendency in society and culture at large.

Women's studies began more modestly with the simple determination to restore women to the curriculum and the canon. In its initial stages, women's studies would probably have settled for the inclusion of (accomplished) women authors in literature courses and some responsible attention to women in history courses. These goals reflected two serious concerns: first, that the curriculum and canon had been fashioned to invite the identification of the young men who were to inherit leadership of the worlds of business, law, and politics, and, accordingly, emphasized male narratives and virtues; second, that even within that framework women's accomplishments and contributions had been systematically devalued if not entirely ignored. The project modestly to revise our inherited tradition so that it simultaneously invited women's identification with it and helped to prepare women for positions of power and responsibility had indisputable merit. Since today most women must contribute to, if not entirely assure, their own livelihoods; since, in many instances, young women comprise half (at places like the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, more than half) the undergraduate population and deserve as good a return on their parents' substantial investment as young men; and since our nation badly needs young women's professional contributions, not to engage young women's identification with our public purposes seems exorbitantly wasteful.

My experience of directing a women's studies program at Emory has steadily deepened my conviction that women's studies offers young women just such opportunities to take possession of their own educations. Emory undergraduates did not initially embrace women's studies, but those who have passed through the introductory courses during the last few years have derived important strengths from them. One of my students wrote in her final paper—a comprehensive review of the fifteen demanding books she had read during the semester—that she had begun with a deep mistrust of feminism, which she equated with "bra-burning," "lesbianism," and anger. "Today," she concluded, "as I turn in my last paper, I consider myself a feminist. Maybe not an *active* feminist, but a definite proponent of feminism." The course, she avowed, had offered her a rare educational experience. "Although I am always academically challenged by my classes at Emory, rarely have I ever been personally challenged. Not only has my definition and attitude towards feminism matured and changed from what I have learned and studied about women in this course, but my own personal self has been affected; I have been challenged to think and reflect on my past, present, and future life as a woman. I have not just learned about women this semester, but I have also grown as a woman."

Another student, from a Southern, Christian family, found the course especially exciting because of the new ways in which it helped her to read her Bible. She devoted her final paper to a number of biblical heroines and drew from her extensive research a new feeling for and identification with the faith in which she had been reared. Yet another took the occasion of the final paper to review all of the courses she had taken in Spanish and English (her double major). Treating the paper as her private commencement address, she assessed the place of women in the liberal education she had received. Never, she insisted, had she viewed that education as restrictive, but her women's studies class did open her eyes to "the limitations of my male dominated education." For until she read an article on the canon for that class she "would not have viewed the canon as a political statement."

Out of a total of 128 authors, her ten English courses had included sixteen women. She believed it predictable that her courses in Chaucer and Shakespeare included only male authors—she did not comment on whether any feminist critics had been

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read—and also noted that the numbers of women authors had recently begun to increase in all courses. She was not complaining about, certainly not berating, her professors, whom she obviously very much admired (and whose syllabi she had kept), but she did hope that things might be different in the future. "If inspiration can take the form of a charge or revelation," she wrote in conclusion, "then my evaluations and this paper will have succeeded in creating a personal impact for me. While the insights that I have gained and the advances of any one woman do not make up for the countless and often unjustified exclusion of women and minorities from the canon today, it lessens the probability that such a reality will mark the canon of the future."

This year, I was invited to give the address at the annual honors ceremony for Emory graduates. I owed the invitation to my having directed the honors thesis of one of the best students in the graduating class, a white man who had written on Kate Chopin and modernism. My student had never taken any women's studies courses, although a number of men do, but the mere presence of the program had broadened his interests. Imperceptibly, as I watched the parade of accomplished students pass by to collect their prizes, I began to register that I was recognizing many more than I should have expected given the small number of students I have taught during my few years at Emory. The introductory women's studies courses that I had taught reconstructed themselves in front of my eyes. There they were: the young women, and the few men, who had braved those first courses. I have done no statistical count, but it is my strong impression that the students in those courses were represented among the honors group out of all proportion to their numbers. If my impression is correct, women's studies at Emory is accomplishing its most serious mission of strengthening young women in self-confidence and achievement.

Women's studies at Emory has, during four short years, emerged as an important and respected part of the university and it enjoys the active support of some of our most conservative, as well as liberal, departments and faculty members. Its success owes much to its political openness—to its commitment to the inclusion of any who chose to participate, regardless of ideology or politics. The program has no "line." The women's studies faculty have debated the policy, with some adopting the embattled view that women have suffered so much and are so systematically devalued that we should maintain vigilance about would-be participants' commitment to feminism. But the inclusive position has prevailed over the exclusive, with the welcome result of an invigorating sense of academic freedom that strengthens our ability to provide a much needed sense of respect and support for our students.

The truth is that women's studies has, during the past two decades, emerged as an academic specialization that boasts an impressive body of scholarship. Not for nothing do publishers wring their hands at the "women's mafia." Scholars and students in women's studies buy and write large numbers of books, many of them good. They have assuredly uncovered a vast body of new information and developed an impressive range of interpretations of problems that many had thought were essentially resolved. Women's studies, in short, constitutes one of the most dynamic and lively disciplines, and no amount of denial or contempt will diminish its vigor. But women's studies scholarship, like women's studies programs, has tended to fall to the preserve of committed feminists. Heated debates among feminists themselves assure that no single line prevails unchallenged, but the general tenor is set by the left, which has proved more receptive than the right to the academic discipline as well as to feminism. Yet as the Republicans are learning about a range of political issues, there is no reason to grant the left a monopoly of women's concerns by default. Women, like men, differ significantly in their religious, political, and cultural values.

Unfortunately, the original women's studies agenda of offering young women an education with which they could in some measure identify, met with outraged and bigoted opposition from many on the right, who established themselves as the defenders of the educational status quo. Those short-sighted opponents of modest change now have a good deal to answer for. Ignoring the wisdom of Giuseppe di Lampedusa, "If things are to remain the same, things must change," they have stumbled into the role of the sorcerer's apprentice, conjuring up dangers much worse than the legitimate requests they were opposing. Their unyielding opposition has strengthened many proponents of women's studies in their bunker mentality and left those of us who oppose the politicization of all academic programs in a dangerously exposed position.

Increasingly, the dominant presence in women's studies is advocating war to the death with established (male) values and spearheading an alarming erosion of confidence in our inherited culture. But the self-proclaimed defenders of that inherited culture have been retreating into a rigid adherence to the time-honored status quo. Neither position will serve. Our inherited culture and values contain much that many feminists cherish—that many of us do, as have innumerable women before us. Yet we cannot hope to prepare young women to deal confidently with the world if we offer them a vision of themselves as dependent upon men for everything from material support to physical protection to a sense of their identities. Nor can we hope to preserve the essence of our tradition if we effectively insist that women of aspiration and modest innovation must be condemned as its enemies.

Women's studies can be no better than we make it. Unilateral opposition will only drive it further down the road of stiffening opposition to Western culture as a whole. And the losers will be those who seek to preserve that culture with the measure of flexible adaptation upon which its survival has always depended.

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese is Eleonore Raoul Professor of the Humanities and director of women's studies at Emory University. Her most recent book is Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South, *and her* Feminism Without Illusions: A Critique of Individualism *will be published by the University of North Carolina Press in the spring of 1991.*

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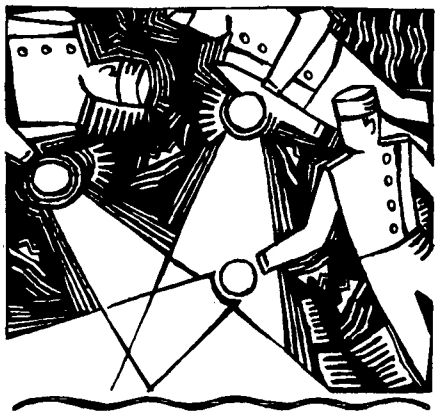

Jeanne Berg

Crimes and Punishments

by David R. Slavitt

The Cook, The Thief, His Wife & Her Lover
Produced by Kees Kasander
Written and directed by
Peter Greenaway
Released by Miramax Films

The Plot Against Harry
Produced by Michael Roemer and
Robert Young
Written and directed by
Michael Roemer
Released by King Screen

Lust, greed, betrayal, murder, and revenge are not at all unusual as the subjects of movies, but Peter Greenaway's extension of these typical concerns to include cannibalism is a half-joking, half-serious gesture that reminds us of the Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedies of blood or even, before that, of the goriest excesses of Senecan theatrics. Who knows? Maybe we are ready for a revival of *Thyestes*.

Albert is the eponymous thief of *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife & Her Lover*. He is absolute appetite, pure impurity—which is, in itself, a fairly complicated piece of business. Greenaway's script calls for actor Michael Gambon to behave swinishly and thuggishly of course, but that wouldn't be enough for us to despise him as keenly as we must if we are to be fully sympathetic to his wife's mannerist revenge. He is as gross and crude as one could imagine, but what gives the behavior its singular odiousness is that his atrocious behavior is in the setting of a grand restaurant, Le Hollandais, the elaborate belle epoch decor of which is not only stunning but symbolic of that whole range of proprieties Gambon so blithely and unremittingly violates. His loud talk in a Cockney accent and his mispronunciations of French words on the menu are characteristic bits in a pattern of escalating desecrations. He belches. He makes crude remarks to and about his attractive and delicate wife, Georgina (Helen Mirren), observing to his band of thugs and cronies with him at the table that "the naughty bits and the dirty bits are so close together," and then looking at her as he demonstrates, holding his thumb and index finger an inch or so apart. There is no propriety or decency that he observes or respects—he even goes barging into the ladies' lavatory to look for Georgina when he thinks she is taking too long in there.

She is, as a matter of fact, taking a long time because she has contrived a way of getting back at Albert. With a rather delicate and soulful man whom she has seen across the restaurant sitting alone at his table and reading, she has engineered a chance meeting and then parlayed that into an abrupt affair that they consummate in one of the ladies' room stalls, as if to demonstrate that, for all of Albert's grossness, he and Yeats may be right after all about the proximity of the naughty bits and dirty bits.

This simple enough set-up is presented with a great deal of panache—dark reds of the dining room give way, abruptly, to an eerie white of the lavatories, and Georgina's dress, a matching red in one shot, turns white and therefore remains matching in the next. There is no attempt at "realism," but indeed, a fairly strenuous effort to escape from its confines. The kitchen of the restaurant is a cavernous place, intimidatingly Hogarthian in its parody of overbearing 19th-century industrial architecture. And at one of the sinks of this grotesque and infernal workplace, one of the marmitons sings in an angelic boy-soprano: "Wash me / thoroughly / and cleanse me of my / iniquity . . ." while an invisible chorus of other voices (other souls? saved or damned?) provides lush harmony and support. Meanwhile, there are corpses of dead animals hanging on racks, as intimidating and distressing as in any of those Dutch genre paintings' cozy and domestic versions of the *momento mori*.

Albert, the thief, owns the restaurant, whatever that means. At the least, it is a necessary condition for much of the action because if he weren't the owner, the chef (Richard Bohringer) would either throw him out or, more likely, prevent him from entering in the first place. But there is also some likelihood of a nudge toward allegory—appetite, let us suppose, is the proprietor of the graces.

The guignol zest of the picture is what makes it interesting and saves it from these allegorical tendencies that get heavier and murkier as the action unfolds. It turns out that Michael's reading is not simply a bit of business but vital to the structure of the piece. The solitary figure with whom Georgina is having it off in pantries and storage rooms in the kitchen is the proprietor of a book depository, whatever that's supposed to be. It isn't a book store or any conventional kind of library, but only a huge warehouse full of books piled up apparently at random, but all of them marked with bookplates. When the wife and her lover are betrayed—as was inevitable, after all—they flee together, stark naked in a truck full of garbage and

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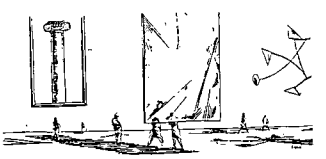

THE LIST SPEAKS FOR ITSELF

Chairman John E. Frohnmayer, defending the National Endowment for the Arts from an attack by Bill Kauffman in the *Wall Street Journal* in May: "As for those who *have* received government support—authors such as Alice Walker, John Irving, Gloria Naylor and Raymond Carver—certainly they have returned our investment in them, both in the tax revenues generated by their works and, more important, through the enriching quality of their prose."

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maggoty meat (Adam and Eve expelled from Paradise?), and head for the book depository because that's not a place that Albert is likely to frequent. What terrible degradations can anyone imagine performing with a book?

This departure from the restaurant's immediate precincts is the film's weakest section. The usual idea that moviemakers have of opening up their work from the confinement of the stage to show lots of exteriors can be effective in a naturalistic film, but here the strategy is a mistake. The world of the restaurant is special, with its own rules and its own bizarre logic, which is another way of saying that we accept its bizarre distortions of experience. Outside, in the universe we all share in common, we have a right to expect common sense to prevail, and it doesn't. We want to call out to the figures on the screen that they ought not lend books with identifying book plates to the pot boy who has brought them take-out food from the restaurant! Bad things will happen. Albert will find you. The pot boy will be tortured and forced to eat his own belly-button, and you will be killed—with your books stuffed into your mouth and up your bloody nostrils so you smother to death. It is, not to belabor the point, a very bad idea. But there they go, doing just that dumb thing we wanted to warn them against. Sometimes there's just no talking to people.

On the other hand, just as one has been about to give up on the movie for its sophomoric pretentiousness, it relaxes, returns to the restaurant, gives us a really fine scene between Georgina and the mysterious chef, and recoups much of what it has lost with a Jacobean revenge fantasy so gaudy and ghastly as to have earned the movie an X rating—which the distributor rejected, preferring to go into the marketplace unrated. What the allegorical significance may be of the cook's preparing of Michael's corpse *en croute* and wheeling it in for Albert to be forced at gunpoint actually to eat is not clear. Probably the allegory has been by this time abandoned (and a very good thing, too, say I) as the film gets caught up in its proper business of the exploitation of its dramatic and sensational possibilities. It isn't Marco Ferreri's *Le Grand Bouffe* that is instructive any more, but those old Roger Corman romps more or less based on stories or poems of Edgar Allan Poe that now enliven—or revive—the movie.

Michael Roemer's film, *The Plot Against Harry*, is a minor triumph of subversive charm with a spectacular performance by Martin Priest as Harry Plotnick, a small-time gangster whose turf has betrayed him. It isn't just that the Italians, blacks, and Puerto Ricans have been giving him trouble; the more serious fact is that the neighborhood has changed, that the Jews have moved out and moved up, and that, in this altered ecology, Harry is an endangered species. The fun of the film comes from the grotesque triumph of respectability over Harry's life as he is suckered into legitimate business deals and middle-class ceremonies. At weddings, bar mitzvahs, circumcisions, and funerals we see him nudged and badgered into conformity, and we watch him assume the posture of paterfamilias as eventually he lets them take him over. Through a mistake at the emergency ward of a hospital to which he has been taken, he believes he has a bad heart and may die at any moment, but it is his loneliness and his lack of any deep-seated meanness that make him vulnerable. One bizarre ritual follows another until we get a glimpse of his abject surrender to his sad-sack brother-in-law who puts him up as an initiate into some deranged and (very slightly) funnier version of the Shriners. Harry even finds himself contributing to worthy causes and, by the time Roemer has finished with him, we get to see him stagger across the set, having what looks like a coronary behind some dreadful tenor doing his number at a Heart Disease telethon.

Roemer shot this in 1969 but couldn't get it released. It was only in 1989 when he was having the film transferred to videotape for his children that the laughter of the man doing the videotape transfer suggested that the time might have arrived for another perfunctory effort or two on behalf of the abandoned work. Roemer submitted it both to the New York and Toronto film festivals and both accepted it the same week.

It is by no means a landmark achievement of modern cinema, but it has an elegant and intelligent charm as well as a modesty and restraint some small French films used to have but that one seldom sees in American pictures. Priest is a kind of genius, a cross between Fernandel and Keaton, but Jewish. Or, one might say, Myron Cohen but with more appeal. The film depends on his languid charm as he represents Plotnick's desire to be liked and admired. If Harry can't get respect as a gambler and gangster, he will settle for the ceremonial respect that is shown to the father at weddings and to the grandfather at circumcisions. If he can't be a Godfather, he'll be a good father, and from that weakness comes his undoing.

Priest's career has been less than a resounding success. I couldn't help wondering about what it would have been like if this film had been shown twenty years ago and had been as successful then as it has been now. I wondered, indeed, if Priest was still alive. It took a couple of phone calls, but I found him—out in California, where he has been living for just over a year, during which time he has been up for seven different roles in pictures but hasn't landed any of them. "You go and you read, and you do your best, but somebody doesn't like the way your left ear lobe hangs." Before that, he said, he'd been doing theater back East. "In New York?" I asked. "In Vermont and Delaware," he said, but, knowing how that sounded, he tried to redeem it a little with a first magnitude name: "I did some Chekhov pieces in Delaware."

For those of us who go to the movies for diversion, this is a lovely little film that has had a peculiar history. For the moviemakers, though, the people whose livelihoods depend on such things, these little quirks are matters of life and death. Priest has been in 75 TV shows and has appeared in 15 films (including Roemer's *Nothing But a Man*, in which he played a redneck Southerner), but if things had been only a little different, who can say what he might have been able to do besides sitting out there in Palmdale, waiting for the phone to ring?

David R. Slavitt is a poet and novelist whose most recent book is Lives of the Saints. *From 1963 to 1965 he was a film reviewer for* Newsweek. *He lives in Philadelphia.*

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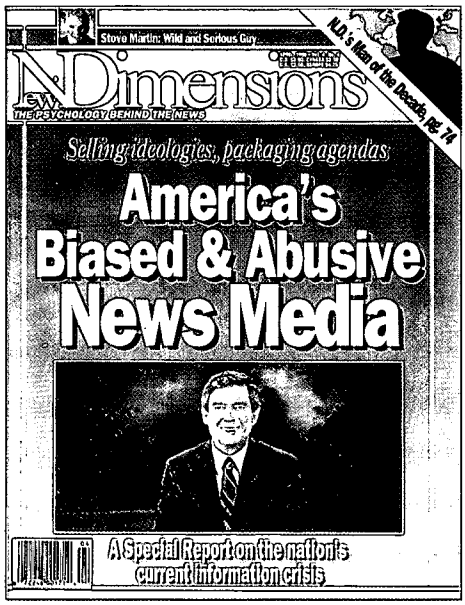
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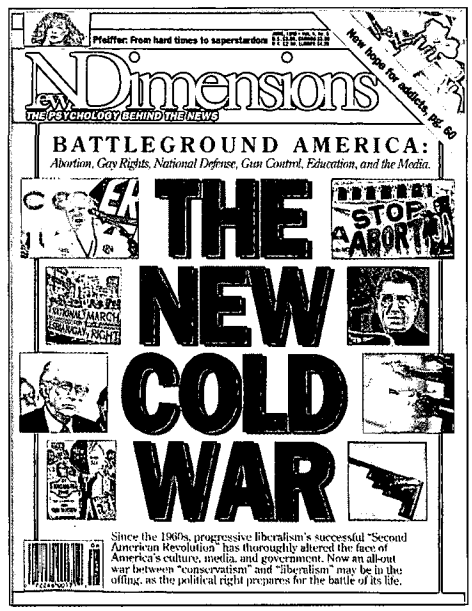
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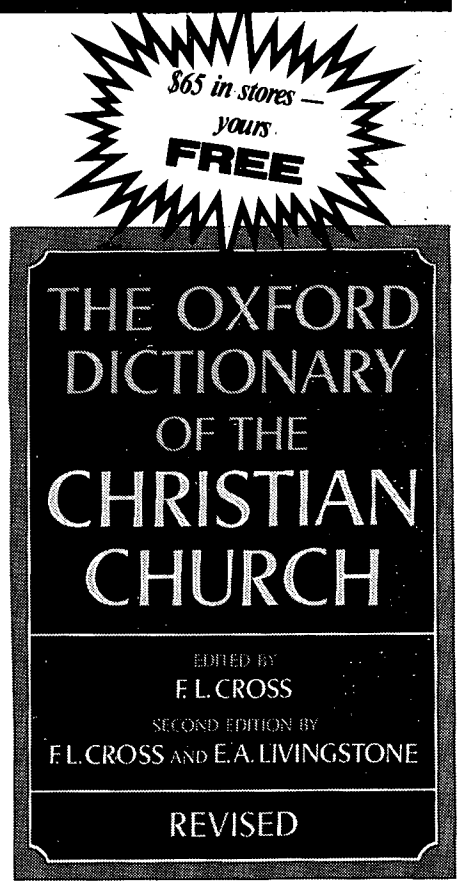
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